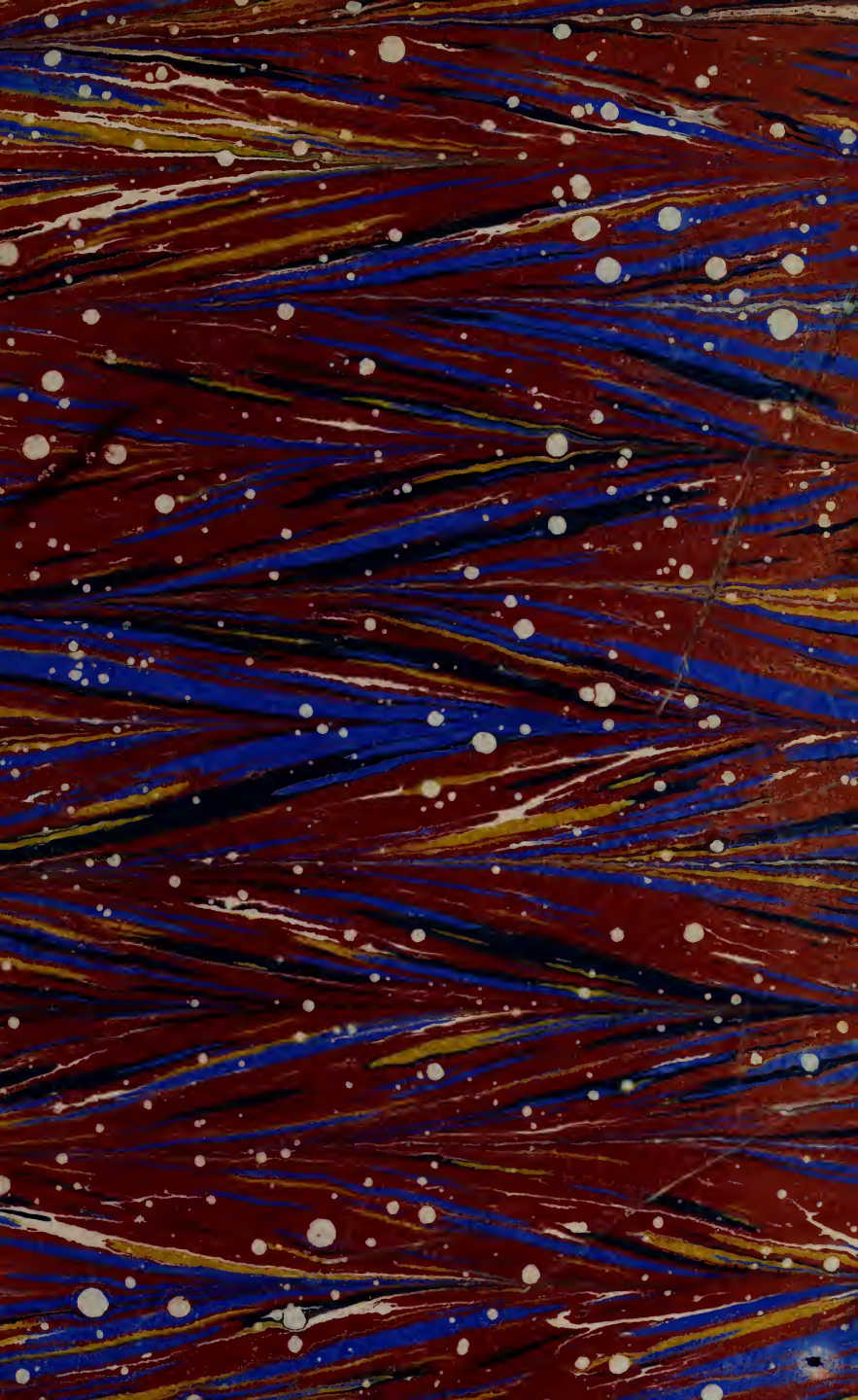

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WANDERINGS BY THE LOIRE.

BY

LEITCH RITCHIE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE PICTURESQUE ANNUAL," "ROMANCE OF FRENCH HISTORY," &c. &c.

WITH

TWENTY ENGRAVINGS,

From Drawings

BY

J. M. W. TURNER, ESQ. R. A.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The author of this book has no desire to conceal the pride which he feels in having his name connected with a work so magnificent in point of art. It is not his fault if the portion for which he is himself answerable shall be thought vastly inferior to the pictorial—he did not write with the pencil of Turner.

On returning from a tour undertaken for the purpose of exploring the scenery of the Loire, he was for some time uncertain in what manner to arrange his materials. He knew that, with a history of France or England in his hand, he might, with the least possible trouble, concoct a book which should be far from uninteresting. This, however, would have been called a compilation, and, besides, would have possessed no novelty for the readers of history.

He determined, therefore, to try to describe the Loire as he saw it with his eyes and imagination — intromitting as little as possible with the descriptions of the artist — and to beguile the tedium which may be supposed to attend a lengthened description, by romantic narratives illustrative of its history or scenery, or the manners and habits of the people.

The present volume is the first of a series which is intended to illustrate, with the pencil and pen, all the most celebrated rivers of Europe. The second will be dedicated to the Seine, as this is to the Loire.

A volume will be published every year, as the pictorial title of the book imports; but the particular time of the year must be determined by circumstances which cannot well bear control in so important an undertaking.

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WANDERINGS BY THE LOIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PATACHE.

When a traveller desires to get into any of the provinces of France, he first betakes himself to the capital, however far it may seem to be out of the line; and from thence he calculates with safety on being conveyed at once to his place of destination. In England, on the contrary, we can go from Bristol to Liverpool without thinking it necessary to visit London. But Paris is not in one, but in every respect the heart of the kingdom. It is the sun of the system, and, as such, an object of worship to the ignorant, and of admiration to the well-informed. It is the centre from which every thing radiates, and the focus to which all things return.

When we were there last, the revolution of July being the idea uppermost in our mind, we looked and listened, with intense curiosity, for the moral traces which might be supposed to follow so stupendous an event. We saw nothing, however, but the usual vanity fair, and heard nothing beyond the usual grumbling of politicians. Things had settled into their natural state; and the

mind of Paris exhibited no more traces of the late tempest than does the sea to-day in which a navy was drowned last week. This time we have the same stimulus for curiosity. The blood of the Parisians is hardly dry on their streets; the echo of the deadly cannonade has hardly melted from the ear; yet the people have already forgotten every thing. The wounds have been dressed, the victims buried, and masons, plasterers, and glaziers, are at work on the shattered walls. The citizens raise their heads, and look at them calmly as they pass, and then pursue their way to the theatre, the Boulevards, or the Palais Royal.

Considerable anxiety, notwithstanding, is evinced by strangers and provincials to get out of a city where such pranks are in fashion, and where people think so little of them. The scene at the police, when we went for our passport,* was quite alarming. We never sustained such a pressure, or were kept so long in a crowd, since the last night of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons at

* The people at the hotels used to go through this farce themselves; but in the Louis-Philippian era, the stranger who has the honour of being admitted into France must appear personally, not only here, but in the office at Calais. In the latter place he receives a provisional passport (containing a detailed description of his person), which he is desired to exchange at Paris for the original one sent forward by the Calaisian authorities. Sometimes, however, the original never arrives. But this is of no consequence; for the whole of this absurd, clumsy, and cumbrous machinery is set into motion for the purpose of putting two francs into the pocket of government, which the traveller pays for his provincial passport! Why do not our ministers retaliate on French visitors? The paltry tax would not keep one Frenchman out of the country—it would put a considerable sum into the treasury—and it would be an infinite satisfaction to every English traveller.

Drury Lane theatre. The French, however, we must confess, have a certain politesse even on such occasions. They squeeze with feeling, and never put their elbows into your side without saying, " Pardon, monsieur ! "

The root of French politeness is vanity; but it is politeness for all that. Every one has a higher opinion of himself than his station in society warrants, and endeavours to secure indulgence for his own foible by treating tenderly that of others. The English in France, for want of understanding this peculiarity, think the French *mean ;* and if their consequent rudeness is repelled in a proper manner, exclaim bitterly against the union exhibited of servility and insolence ! When two beggars, on meeting, pull off their hats, and inquire ceremoniously after the health of one another's madame, the English laugh. They remember that they were addressed by them but a minute before, with " Do give a half-penny to a poor devil ! " and cannot conceive how people in such circumstances should think of ceremony. It is precisely because they *are* poor devils that they are polite. It is their only pride—their solitary consolation amidst the scoffs and buffets of this bitter world. God help them ! A man who would laugh at their grimaces, except in ignorance, would rob a church.

The bondage of the house-servants in France has no degradation in it. They cannot understand the absurd and insolent hauteur of English masters and mistresses : they feel that, although servants, they are men and women, like their betters ; or rather they

have no *betters*, except in the accidental circumstance of situation. A girl may be seen walking side by side, and sometimes arm in arm, with her mistress along the street, and the familiarity engenders no contempt; while among the spectators there cannot be any doubt as to the relative rank of the parties, the maid confining herself scrupulously to the dress of her caste.

In her application for the employment, the servant shews clearly the footing on which she wishes to engage. She does not advertise, "Wants a place, a young woman, to do for a family;" but, "Mademoiselle Julie, who understands plain cookery, is ambitious of undertaking the situation of servant of all work;" or, "A demoiselle, of a reasonable age and of the highest respectability, has the honour of proposing to manage the kitchen department."

But we must leave the great Vanity Fair, where courtesy is the current coin, and proceed, a solitary but not discontented wanderer, towards the heart of the kingdom. We had, on other occasions, followed the course of the Rhone and the Rhine, and were now anxious to see the Loire. The character of the first is sublimity; of the second, the picturesque; and of the third, as we were told, beauty and majesty combined. The Loire, to an Englishman, is the most interesting of the three. It waters those famous countries of Touraine and Anjou, where the bones of his ancestors are found to this day. Its banks are connected with numberless associations both of history and romance. Blue Beard and Cœur-de-Lion jostle on the scene. Every ruin on its hills is celebrated in story—every

dash of its enchanted wave calls up the spirits of memory—

> " By a thousand tokens of sight and sound
> Thou wilt *feel* thou art treading on haunted ground!"

If auguries can be drawn from the weather, we might have promised ourselves a fortunate journey; for there never shone a more glorious evening than the one on which we left Paris. There was no twilight; for the evening, though different in character, seemed as bright as the day. The skies were of a golden yellow, dappled in different shades, and streaked with crimson in the west; and, as if eyeing the show with impatience, a great round moon, already far above the horizon, waited till her hour of empire should arrive.

The crimson at last faded into gold, and the gold was transmuted to silver; but, as before, the change was in the character, not quantity, of the light. The moon—

> " O call her fair, not pale!"—

shewed not a shade of her accustomed melancholy; it had, from first to last, been a jour de fête, and the various powers of nature were joyful by convention.

The effect of this, in one instance, was very curious. Three diligences had left Paris at the same moment, and were crawling along as usual, like huge alligators, at the rate of four miles an hour. By and by they began to snort and fling; and by the time the last tinge of evening had faded from the sky, and it was now the

radiant and rejoicing night, unable longer to withstand the influence of the hour, they set off racing, and chasing, and roaring, as if seized with madness. We never witnessed such a spectacle in France before; and occurring as it did in the deep middle of the night, on a lonely road stretching across a measureless plain of fields and meadows steeped in moonlight, the effect was indescribably strange. This phenomenon continued the whole night, but did not continue long. The reign of the moon expired before she was half weary of the throne, and the usurping day-star rose, like a strong man rejoicing in his strength. The labourers came out to their work in the fields, whistling as they came, with dogs and children gamboling round them; and the lasses of the village glided trippingly along, with their bright pewter milk-vessels glancing in the sun. All the world was astir; and so short had seemed the time filled up with such a show, that we could hardly understand how an evening and a night could have passed since we left Paris.

Our first view of the Loire was productive of disappointment. The banks here are flat and tame, and the stream more like a haunt of Mercury, in his commercial character, than of the muses. A revulsion took place in our feelings: we thought bitterly of that bogie of sensitive authors, the Public, and wished ourselves on the Rhine, or in it. We became more reconciled to the scene, however, on approaching nearer. The river is broad, full, and rapid; and the city of Orleans, built on the water's edge, impresses the imagination even of those who are unacquainted with its

historical associations. From the further end of the bridge more especially, which spans the stream with nine wide arches, its appearance is magnificent. The towers of the old cathedral, seen on the left, are the principal object, and terminate the view with a venerable majesty which confers its own character upon all the other details.

From this spot, the town appears to be built upon a perfect flat; and at the present moment there is a kind of repose in the whole scene which we never before witnessed in any of the crowded haunts of men. It is partly, no doubt, owing to the extreme sultriness of the weather that the few inhabitants we see move slowly and languidly about. The tap of a solitary hammer upon the shore is heard distinctly, as if there was no other sound among the thousands of human beings around it; the mariners recline at full length in their antique-looking vessels, whose white sails hang in utter lifelessness from the mast; and the fruit-women suffer their heads, that are turbaned with handkerchiefs of every bright and glorious colour, to nod over their forgotten stalls, while they dream of custom which would just now be accounted a plague.

This spirit of repose, however, receives its colour from the cathedral, which impresses upon the whole scene a character of conventual stillness united with Romish grandeur. Its silence resembles that of a ruined temple, crowded only by the phantoms of memory; and as we stand here, musing and solitary, with only the stilly murmur of the waters beneath in our ear, we are ready to believe that we behold a city of history

conjured up from the grave of time, and peopled by shadows.

Sauntering slowly along the bridge, we at length entered the forest of houses, and prepared to explore. There is to some people — and we confess ourselves to belong to this class — an extraordinary pleasure in wandering, for the first time, through a foreign town, ignorant and uninquiring, without a plan and without a purpose — turning from street to street, from building to building, from group to group — mingling in crowds, gazing at windows, staring at faces, unknowing and unknown, a foreign language in our ear, a new costume before our eye, new manners, new features, new character, in men, their business, pleasures, customs, habitations. Alone where all else are united, in the scene but not of it, a feeling of pride mingles with the idea of strange and outcast solitude. We are like a being of another sphere, endowed with power to wander at will through the ranks of mankind, to penetrate unobserved into crowds, to single out, when we choose, an individual victim, and

> "Probe his heart, and watch his changing cheek,"

without being subject, in turn, to the power possessed by others,

> "At once the observer's purpose to espy,
> And on himself roll back his scrutiny."

A day employed thus vaguely is not thrown away, even when the purpose of the traveller is to seek precise information. He obtains a general idea on which to found his after acquisitions; his mind is

saturated, as it were, with the character of the scene; and when he comes to make his inquiries in detail, he finds that he is no longer a stranger.

On entering the town, we found, instead of a plain of houses, as it had appeared, a series of streets rising on gentle eminences. In one place, indeed, the inequality of the ground is so great, that a street is thrown like a bridge over the valley, in which other streets run below. The effect here, however, is not so great as the same circumstance produces on the more gigantic proportions of Edinburgh. Many of the streets are narrow, winding, irregular, and picturesque; but, in general, they are well built, and apparently intended for the accommodation of the *better* middling orders of society. The doors and windows, as we passed, were all open, gasping for air, and the interior of the houses distinctly visible. On the shady side of the street the inhabitants sat, working languidly on the comparatively cool stones of the pavement.

We at length arrived at the cathedral, and were thankful that we had done so; for there is not a more delightful refuge from the glare of the sun than those huge temples of Catholic idolatry. For some moments after entering, we were absorbed in the pleasurable sensations arising from a change of temperature; and the next thing which struck us was the intense and unusual silence of the scene. In the distance, a priest was standing at the high altar, with four boys, dressed in white, kneeling on the steps behind him. The enclosed area was lined on either side with a rank of kneeling priests, in highly picturesque costume; and the

whole of these figures were so absolutely motionless, as to resemble statues more than living men.

As we approached, the echo of our measured, tiptoe tread ran hushingly round the vault, like the voice of one enjoining silence in a whisper. Before the rails there was a coffin, with a plain black pall, and near it a few mourners on their knees, the men at one side, and the women at the other. The rite, therefore, in which they were engaged, was the service for the dead. The profound silence of all, both priests and laymen, the clasped hands, the eyes fixed on the ground, the utter lifelessness of the figures, together with the gorgeous dresses of the ecclesiastics, the black weeds of the mourners, and the solemn and antique grandeur of the temple above and around them, formed in their union one of the most remarkable pictures we had ever beheld.

Suddenly a low, mournful chant, deepened and mellowed by wind instruments, broke from the lips of the priests, and, resounding for a few moments through the temple, died slowly away. It was answered by a shrill but sweet strain, in the voices either of women or boys; and as the singers were invisible—concealed, probably, by an immense black drapery which overhung the space behind the altar, it seemed like a reply from heaven. The whole scene was inexpressibly touching, from its solemnity, and the contrast afforded by its earnestness to the fainting and relaxation without. At such a moment, we look upon the dead with neither grief nor horror; but rather with a kind of affectionate congratulation. We ourselves

Drawn by J.M.W. Turner R.A.

Engraved by Thos. Higham.

must return into "the hum, the crowd, the shock of men," into the world where the sun scorches while he enlightens, and the villain stabs while he smiles: but he—that calm, dark, silent, mystic guest of the church—his wanderings are over; he has reached the bourn of his pilgrimage; he has arrived at a place—the enviable yet dreaded destination of all—where the sun shines not, where the winter chills not, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest!"

The cathedral, called the church of Sainte Croix, was founded in the thirteenth century, ruined by the Calvinists in the sixteenth, and rebuilt by Henri Quatre, who laid the corner-stone in person, in 1601. The ancient towers remained till about a century ago, when they were demolished to make room for the new, which, with the portico, also a modern erection, are the finest parts of an edifice supposed to be one of the most beautiful specimens of ecclesiastical architecture in France.

A short distance from the Sainte Croix is the Mairie —a jumble of old houses, surrounding a court not vastly unlike an English farm-yard. If the reader imagines himself standing with his back to the gate, he will comprehend the position of the artist while sketching the opposite view. On the left is the theatre, with two lower buildings, appearing as wings, one of which is the Café de Loiret, and the other the Café de la Comedie. The cathedral then appears, with its fine Gothic towers overtopping the other houses; and the whole piece gives as accurate an idea of the localities

as it is possible for the pencil to convey. The living figures, the procession, the carriages—those adjuncts which the poetical imagination of our friend has so characteristically supplied—afford an admirable contrast to the still and silent scene from which we have just emerged. His fruit-women, too, are all wide awake, and as busy as they can be in realising the dreams of ours.

Our attention was next attracted by a monument in the Place du Martroy—an irregular and somewhat awkward-looking square, although the best in the town. It represented a female figure, standing on a massive pedestal of white marble, with a sword in one hand, and a standard in the other. We saw nothing but mediocrity, or something less, in the workmanship; but here, in the town of Orleans itself, was it possible to gaze without reverence on the statue of the heroic Maid? In spite of the beastliness of Voltaire—the clever, snappish, impudent, heartless petit-maître of French philosophy—with the sneers of far less talented and still more superficial inquirers, we look upon this admirable enthusiast to be one of the finest characters presented in the history of her country. The statue, however, is quite unworthy of her, and perhaps was a hasty erection, substituted for the more ancient monument destroyed in the revolutionary fever in 1792, when a love of liberty degenerated into disease.

The church of St. Aignan, where Louis XII. acted as canon, and received the alms, is worth seeing; the bridge is handsome and spacious—and this is absolutely all that the ancient capital presents in the way of lions.

Orleans is supposed to be the Genabum Carnatum mentioned in the Commentaries of Cæsar, which afterwards took the name of Aurilianum, or Auriliana Civitas, whence the modern corruption, Orleans. It was besieged and taken (supposing the identity established) by Cæsar himself, and later the attempt was made by Attila. The latter, however, was driven away by the prayers of Saint Aignan, who was then bishop, assisted a little by the arms of the Romans, Visigoths, and Francs, who had joined forces.

Piganiol tells us that it is said proverbially, that "la glose d'Orléans est pire que le texte;" which means, according to his solution, that the Orléanais have the gift of raillery, inasmuch as such people are accustomed to add *notes*, as it were, to their facts, till the text is lost in the commentary. This, it must be allowed, is sufficiently far-fetched; but it scarcely equals in pleasantry the mode which a poet has taken of accounting for the number of hunchbacks which are seen in Orleans. This deformity, it seems, was unknown till the people complained to Fate of the hills and hillocks with which their country was at that time afflicted.

"Oh! oh! leur répartit le Sort,
Vous faites les mutins, et dans toutes les Gaules
Je ne vois qué vous seuls qui des monts vous plaigniez;
Puis donc qu'ils nuisent à vos pieds,
Vous les aurez sur vos épaules!"

The traveller is usually invited by the Orléanais to visit the source of the Loiret, two leagues from the town, and the visit is pleasant enough to be worth the trouble. The river rises in what looks like an artificial

pond, in the centre of which you see the water bubbling and whirling; and this is the birth of the Loiret.

Leaving behind the great woods extending in the distance—which were formerly so famous for murderers and their punishment, that one of them still rejoices in the name of the Bois des Pendus—we bade adieu to Orleans, and plunged into the midst of the orchards and plantations on the right bank of the river, with the view of proceeding to Blois. Among our fellow-travellers — for this time we indulged ourselves in a ride in the diligence—was an old lady, who amused the company by bouncing into a violent passion on being asked for her passport. She had travelled, she said, up and down, backwards and forwards, lengthways and breadthways, for the last half century, and had passed, till this disgraceful hour, in freedom and honour, by the royal signet of woman, the unquestioned and unquestionable privilege of her sex! The gendarmes were at length awed, if not convinced; and, informing her that she was at liberty to proceed on condition of her providing herself with a passport at the next town, they shut the door instantaneously to avoid hearing her indignant refusal of the conditions. This is by no means an uncommon scene. The French have a habitual deference for women, which is neither gallantry, nor affectation, nor puppyism: they are brought up to it.

The village of Saint-Ay, three leagues from Orleans, was the first stage. It is situated amidst the vineyards which produce the famous Orleans wine, scarcely inferior to Burgundy itself, and commands a fine view of the river and its opposite banks. There the village of

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R. A.

Engraved by R. Brandard

Notre Dame de Cléry, with its lofty church, is the principal object: the latter renowned as the grave of Louis XI.—this odd compound, who was at once a cunning politician, an absurd bigot, a useful king, and an atrocious villain.

A league and a half farther, we passed through Mehan, a small town, where Jean Clopinel, one of the authors of the famous Romance of the Rose, was born in 1280; and after a ride of the same distance, reached Beaugency. There is something odd in the appearance of this place, which captivated our imagination at once. In vain we were told by our fellow-travellers that there was nothing to be seen; and in vain we recollected that De Villiers, the travelling postman,* passes it in a single sentence. It was necessary to judge for ourselves; and leaving the diligence people changing horses and eating soup, we ran at full speed into the town, to see the lions.

The bridge over the Loire is itself a curiosity, consisting of no fewer than thirty-nine arches; but the enormous square tower in the middle of the town was the principal object of attraction. This, we were told, is all that remains of an ancient fort, and, apparently, it must have been connected with other buildings of great strength. A fine range of lofty, antique houses runs along the quay, and behind them stands a venerable church. The streets are narrow, dark, crooked, and without the slightest pretension to regularity in the architecture. Sometimes they are connected

* Itinéraire de la France, &c. Par Vaysse de Villiers, Inspecteur des Postes, &c.

by vaulted passages, dark, cold, and dreary; sometimes a canal in miniature runs along them in the middle, crossed by rude wooden bridges, or simply by a plank thrown from side to side. The water, after serving faithfully one street, is conducted to another by the shortest way, disappearing with a rumbling, grumbling sound beneath the houses, and rushing through the interior.

The whole place, in short, afforded a bodily representation of the idea we had formed, from the study of old writers, of a town of the middle ages: nor were the manners, habits, and appearance of the people less of the old-world caste. The main road running past the town rather than through it, and the post-house being at a little distance beyond, few travellers are tempted to pause for the purpose of exploring a place which only a dreamer like ourselves would think worthy of notice. The inhabitants, therefore, are seldom favoured with the sight of a stranger; and when they are, they look upon the circumstance with an interest proportioned to its rarity. As we insinuated ourselves through the narrow streets, many a head was thrust out of the windows to stare at us as we passed; and one ancient lady, seated by the tiny canal, ducking a child, had nearly drowned the object of her care, forgetting, in her astonishment, to raise him from the depths, where he lay kicking and choking in her grasp. In general, the population may be seen at their doors, or sitting in the street at work; and thus each neighbourhood resembles a single family. When a visit is paid, it must be to the street, not to the individual;

and for ourselves, we have no doubt that such intercommunication, in which the news of one quarter is carried to another, perhaps fifty or a hundred yards distant, are quite as interesting as a national embassy despatched from continent to continent.

While cogitating over such matters, and returning the stare of the natives with all our eyes, the idea of the diligence suddenly galloped across our brain, and, in some alarm, we took to flight, and made for the post-house as directly as we could. The diligence was gone! We saw it at the top of a distant hill, and continued our race with renewed impetuosity. It disappeared; but when we had gained the summit, we saw it as before, though at a greater distance. We ran on: it again disappeared, and we saw it no more.

The mishap was not so unimportant as the reader may imagine. Our baggage, which contained also the treasury of the journey, was merely inscribed with our name. What certainty had we that it would be left for us at Blois? or even that we should ever see it again? In the mean time we had only two or three francs in our pockets; and we had a journey of eight leagues and a half to perform in a burning mid-day sun. To turn back to Beaugency and hire a carriage was out of the question, for we had no money to pay for it, and but little probability of being better situated when we reached our destination; while, to wait for the next public conveyance would diminish, if not destroy, the little chance we appeared to have of regaining our baggage. It was necessary, therefore, to gird up our loins and walk, as stoutly as we might;

and, wreaking our vengeance on the district by feloniously cutting a stick in the next plantation, we set forth on the pedestrian adventure.

Not a great many years ago, and in a like situation, we should have fancied ourselves a hero of romance; a few centuries earlier, and we should have been a knight-errant! Who could have grumbled at a walk of eight leagues and a half with such ideas crowding into his mind? We had been dragged back into the past by Beaugency—even now we were on the classic ground of chivalry. The glorious country on our right, with its vast vineyards stretching away till lost in the distance—the glorious river on our left, sweeping along its course in beauty and in pride; the glorious sun above showering his spear-like beams upon our head—combined to steep our senses in a kind of intoxication. The trump of the herald was in our ear; the glitter of armour in our eye; the brave, the fair, the noble, the personages of history, the as palpable creations of old romance, swept before our vision; and as the pageant passed we felt our heart beat high and our step grow firm and free.

Such are the advantages of imagination,—such are the virtues of FICTION. Let those still deride who place the sole pride and happiness of human beings—not made up, be it remembered, merely of bones, sinews, muscles, senses, but also of heart, mind, and intellect—in the advancement of the exact sciences. For us, we will continue to fill up the dreary waste which life sometimes presents with the airy fabrics of poetry; and we will teach our children to look upon

romance neither as a toy nor as a terror; but when properly used and seasonably administered, as a natural and wholesome "medicine for a mind diseased." We will teach them, however, that *they* must be the magician and romance the slave, which is only to come when summoned by their enchantments. Wo to him who sinks into the power of the ministers assigned by nature for his service—to whom romance becomes, like opium to its victim, no longer a sweet and soothing cordial in distress and disease, but a deadly poison, with intoxication in its taste, and despair in the dregs!

Having walked three leagues and a half, we were not sorry to find ourselves in a little town called Mer, embosomed in plantations. The road hitherto had lain through a seemingly interminable series of vineyards, enlivened with fitful glimpses of the Loire; but here there was a good deal of fine woodland scenery, which relieved the sameness of the prospect, and added to its beauty. A little cabaret by the way side was a welcome haven to a piéton in circumstances like ours; and having consulted our pockets, we went in, and ventured to call for a chopine. Never were we sensible till now of the blessings of wine! It was brought up from a deep pit or cellar in the middle of the room, into which a little Hebe of a lass descended by means of a ladder, and was as deliciously cold as if it had been packed in ice. The good woman of the cabaret, to do her justice, listened with great feeling (and Rose herself, we assure the reader, with nothing less) to the story of our misadventure; although neither could administer much comfort, except in the form of wine.

One of those little country carriages, however, they said, called pataches, (which in general are nothing more than a cart covered with leather, like a cabriolet,) was in the habit of passing sometimes on its way to Blois; but the hour of the arrival depended entirely upon casualties, which the conducteur himself could not foresee. The conducteur, luckily, was like a more eminent conductor—we mean the omnibus individual;—he appeared the moment he was spoken of.

The patache, to which we were thus casually introduced, is a vehicle that the traveller who wishes to see the people as well as the country will frequently have recourse to. Its voyagers are a grade lower in society than those of the diligence; but for this very reason, they have more of the moral picturesque, and are more worthy of being set up as studies for the curious in human nature. With us at this moment there were two pretty young girls, whose names, by the same token, were Annette and Lisette, who had been on a visit for a few days with a relation at Beaugency. This was a glorious era in the life of girls of fifteen or sixteen, who had never before been out of their native village; and their young faces still beamed with pride and delight. As we approached their destination, they became agitated with a thousand beautiful feelings that may exist elsewhere, but are never visible except in a French girl. They jumped from their seats, to try who should catch the first glimpse of the superb walnut-tree that overshadowed their cottage. When we had actually arrived at the door, they sprang out of the vehicle like wild animals, and

into the arms of their mother. They did not stay for the formal French embrace, consisting of three kisses on the cheek; but a volley of such kindnesses bespoke the empire of nature over art. Then came the production of the bonbons for the younger children—the flutter of self-consequence and the glow of affection with which the packet was opened—the shouts of the expectant imps—the smile of the proud mother, as she gazed upon the group. Wine was offered to the passengers, and accepted by *us;* and never did we toast our mistress's health more devoutly than we now drank blessing and prosperity to that small fireside and that humble roof-tree. Even the horse of the patache was not forgotten: he received a luncheon of corn from the mother for his attention in carrying her daughters. He might have had wine to wash it down if he had chosen; but this odd animal takes water by preference.

At the moment a sound of fiddling attracted our attention; and, on turning round, we saw realised for the first time one of those Arcadian pictures which so often drag us away in the English theatres from a world of strife, and pomp, and bitterness. A procession of villagers swept like a dream across the road, preceded by a musician fiddling as he flew. They ran, or rather bounded in pairs—*solus cum solâ*—the young men leading their partners by the hand. The girls were dressed in the purest white, a colour universally worn in many of the French provinces on fête occasions; and, with their towering caps of the snowiest muslin, enriched with lace, they looked "like some gay creatures of the element." Each of the lads wore a large knot of blue

ribands on that part of the breast on which noblemen stick their paltry stars; and they, as well as their mistresses, were decorated besides with a nosegay of rich sweet flowers.

And we, at such a moment, are in a patache! Good heaven! why can we not foot it leisurely along, with a travelling knapsack on our back, and a staff in our hand, like the happy dogs we sometimes rattle past while immured in the sepulchral diligence? There is one at this moment who has turned aside from his path to follow the nuptial procession. He is a fine, frank, high-spirited, soldier-like, young fellow; but he has walked all day, if we may judge by his burnt face and dusty shoes. What matter? When arrived at the green he will be received as a brother by the masters of the revel; and he will throw down his staff and knapsack — and perhaps his dusty shoes into the bargain — and mix in the dance, the gayest and merriest of them all.

Nor will he want a partner; for a young man, decorated with blue ribands, has just whispered something into the ear of Annette, which she repeats, with a smile and a blush, to her sister. The three set off arm in arm to join the procession. Now they quicken their steps—now they begin to run, afraid of losing an instant of the enjoyment — and now they vanish. And we — who would have danced it as featly as any of them, who would have joked with Lisette, and have begged or stolen a riband for our button-hole, and been prouder of the distinction than if it had been the ensign of knighthood — "Yee! chick! — chick!" Off we go,

dragged at the tail of an old horse — the victim of authorship and fate. What a thing it is to be always in a hurry!

The left, or opposite bank of the Loire, seems here to be the more beautiful; but perhaps

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view."

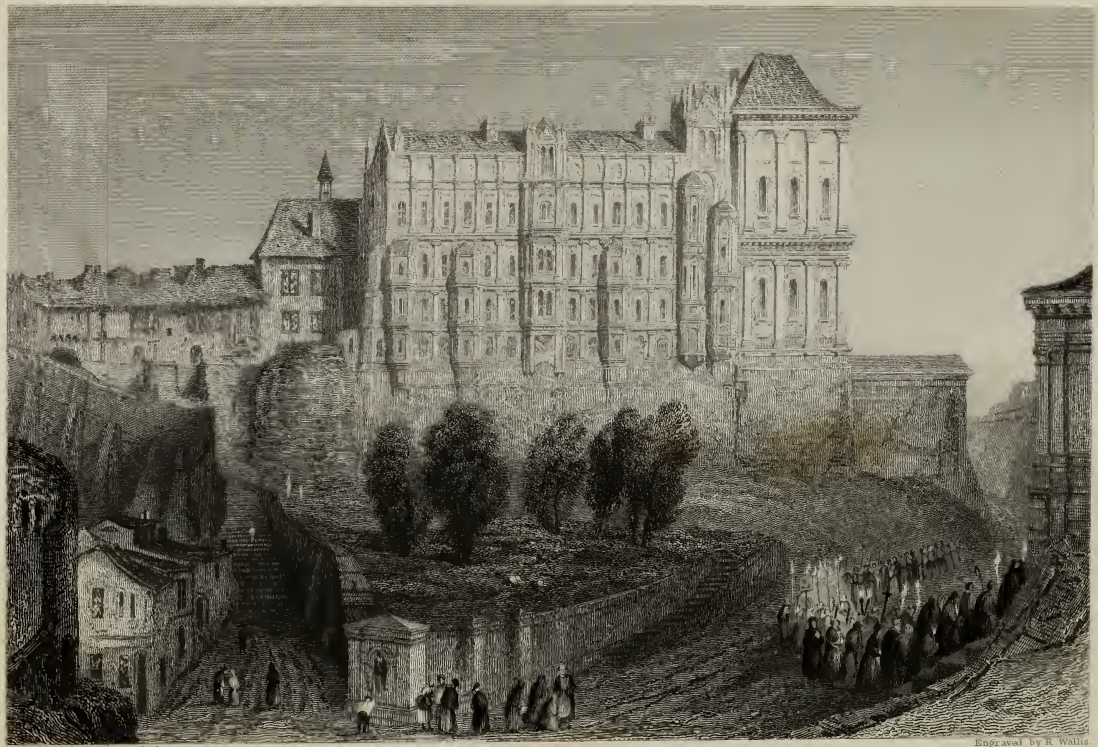
The forests of Russy and Boulogne, however, form undoubted points of magnificence in the picture, as well as the celebrated château of Chambord, with its park of seven leagues' circumference. This château, which was built in twelve years, by Francis I., with the aid of eighteen hundred workmen, is half a league from the river, and four leagues from Blois. When seen at a distance, the traveller takes it for a town rather than an individual edifice; and its innumerable towers and turrets, richly sculptured, and studded with small black stones, give the idea of extensive fortifications. In the interior may be mentioned the eight rooms of state, so vast and so lofty that they resemble the halls of giants. The second story is vaulted; and the double staircase by which you ascend is so constructed, that two persons may pass upwards or downwards without seeing each other. Chambord was long a favourite residence of the French kings, till it was presented by Louis XIV. to Marshal Saxe, and afterwards by Napoleon to Berthier. A traveller remarks, with some vexation, that the writing of Francis I. on the window of the closet next the chapel is no longer to be seen —

"Souvent femme varie,
Mal habil qui s'y fie."

For our part we are glad of it. Francis no doubt perpetrated this act of lèse-majesté against the sex in a moment of pique; yet, aware even then that repentance might soon follow, wrote the record on glass.

Blois, eight leagues and a half from Beaugency, is a very magnificent feature in the landscape; but—keeping the château out of the question—nothing more. The streets are narrow, irregular, and ill-built, rising confusedly towards the cathedral on the right, and the château on the left. The former stands on the loftiest point of the town; and its tower is a very beautiful structure. You ascend to it by passages which it would be unfair to dignify with the name of streets. Rarely can they admit of two vehicles passing; and sometimes they afford room only for the one-wheeled carriages, which it might seem invidious to name. Towards the cathedral the streets are laid out in broad, low steps, so that you approach the summit of the town by flights of stairs.

These peculiarities make the place tell well in an *outside* view, as will be seen by the opposite engraving. The bridge is handsome, and, above all, substantial; and in the middle there is an obelisk, which gives you to understand by an inscription, that it enjoys the distinction of having been the first public work commenced in the reign of Louis XV. The château, however, is the grand object of attraction, without which the town of Blois would be among the most uninteresting we have ever seen. This magnificent ruin—for it is little else than a ruin—exhibits a mixture of an earlier style with those of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The



Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R. A.

Engraved by R. Wallis.

south and east façades, constructed under Louis XII., are Gothic; the north presents a specimen of the more modern taste of the age of Francis I.; and the west, perhaps the most beautiful, was built by Gaston d'Orleans, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, after the designs of the famous architect Mansard. As a whole, the château, of which an accurate idea is conveyed by the annexed view, strikes the spectator by its solidity and magnificence — all the more remarkable for the meanness of the houses surrounding it.

This castle plays a famous part in the wars of that ultra Catholic Association known in French history by the name of the League. It was here that the Duc de Guise was assassinated, the grand agitator of the day; and it was here that the states were assembled which raised the cross against the sceptre. The legal murder of Mary Stuart by her relation Elizabeth — that admirable queen and hateful woman — had probably paved the way for the destruction of Balafré, as well as for many other atrocities, by inflaming the fury of the Catholics; but indeed the history of this fearful time — only a little while later than the *festival* of St. Bartholomew — is so filled with horrors that it is not easy to trace causes or effects.

The origin of Blois is lost in the shadows of antiquity. We only know that a subterranean aqueduct, called the Arou, traverses the town from end to end, so wide and so lofty that several persons may walk in it abreast, and that this is the work of the Romans. Blois was the birth-place of Louis XII., the best of the French kings, and of many other celebrated characters.

All these, however, are far from our times; and its ancient reputation for purity of dialect is now also lost. The presence of a court, in fact, is not an unmitigated evil. It is like a candle introduced in the dark, which does a great deal more besides attracting moths.

Before leaving Blois, it may be well to set the reader's mind at ease with respect to our luggage, about which he is no doubt exceedingly anxious. We found it at the coach-office, decorated with a printed paper, signed by the authorities of the town, commanding it to be opened, *and the contents sold* within a given number of days, provided the owner did not make his appearance! It was lucky for us that we did not follow the nuptial procession (which we had more than half a mind to do), as unfortunately we have not the gift of calculating time very curiously when placed in agreeable circumstances.

Determining to try the patache again as far as Amboise, and, moreover, to be exceedingly prudent and Scotchman-like, we saw with our own eyes our goods and chattels deposited therein; and having ascertained that the vehicle was to start in half an hour, and that there was no possibility of our mistaking the road, seeing that there is but one, we wandered on with the intention of enjoying the walk till our pair of legs should be relieved by four.

The river here tumbles down with such rapidity that we wondered how the upward navigation could be carried on at all, unless by the assistance of steam. Numerous vessels, however, heavily laden, were seen crawling steadily onward against the tide by the assist-

ance of a single immense oblong sail. The effect of this is very curious; and we do not remember to have witnessed the like on any other river. These vessels are long and narrow, with the stern cut sheer down to the keel; they are generally fastened two or three together (we suppose for company's sake); and their sails being beautifully white, they form a very attractive object in the picture. When the wind becomes weaker than the tide, they instantly drop anchor; and the voyage, in this manner, is a succession of rest and sleepy motion. Sometimes, we were told, the transit from Nantes to Orleans takes two months!—but the mariners need not confine themselves the whole time to shipboard, as they run no risk of being left behind if they should pay a visit, turn about, to the land. The degree of wind, however, required to carry on their vessels is less than one would imagine. We have seen them continue to advance, however slowly, when we could hardly feel the breath upon our cheek. This, of course, is owing to the surface presented to the wind by the lofty sail being so much greater than that opposed to the tide by the pointed prow and flat bottom of the boats.

It is not known at what time the famous *levée* of the Loire, on which we were now walking, was commenced. Some persons attribute the honour to Charlemagne; but the edict of his son Louis le Débonnaire, in 819, does not mention the existence of any former works. The inhabitants of Touraine and Anjou had suffered so much from the floods of the river, which

sometimes swept away an entire harvest, that they petitioned the king for assistance; who accordingly ordered a mole or levée to be built along the right bank, the southern frontier of his kingdom, and intrusted the superintendence of the works to his son Pepin. But the arts which seemed to have been conjured up for a moment from their Roman ruins by the genius of Charlemagne, had already begun to sink; and all that were produced by the royal edict, were some narrow and insignificant dykes. A medal, however, was struck in honour of the exploit, with the somewhat prophetic inscription, *Vias tuas edoce me, Domine.*

At the beginning of the eleventh century the same kind of partial defence was erected between Saumur and Angers; but it was not till the year 1160, under the reign of Henry II., King of England and Earl of Anjou, that all these dykes were joined together, so as to form an unbroken barricade against the waters. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the idea was first conceived of carrying highways along the summit of the levée; and in the beginning of the fourteenth, under Philip of Valois, the works were enlarged, covered with coarse sand, and even paved in some places, so as to form a public road.

The levée is about twenty-two feet high, sloping down precipitately on either side. A low parapet, next the river, is a very insufficient protection for carriages at night; but on the other side a line of poplars does more both for beauty and utility. This

splendid road will continue to be taken by all travellers of taste whose destination is Tours, Bourdeaux, Rochelle, Angers, or Nantes.

We had now walked so far without being overtaken by the patache, that we began to think it was too bad to quiz the poor horse so unmercifully; and in the humility of our triumph we slackened our pace, peeped into the cottages, asked wise questions about agriculture of the labourers, — joked on more interesting topics with the barefoot lasses; and, finally, stood stock still. The afternoon was far advanced, and the clouds of evening "cast their shadows before" upon our mind. We remembered the off-hand way of disposing of a traveller's baggage that seemed to be the fashion in this part of the world; and at length, in no small discontentment, resolved to turn back. What guarantee had we for the honesty of the patache, which we had left standing at the door of a miserable auberge? Even *if* honest, and only detained by mere accident, we should have to perform the journey to Amboise during the night, which was precisely the reason that had deterred us from choosing the more *respectable* diligence. In growing alarm we retraced our steps; and after two hours' hard walking, found ourselves again at the door of the miserable auberge at Blois; but luckily the patache was there also, *in statu quo*, and our alarm was turned into indignation.

"You have kept us waiting, sir," said the conducteur, rubbing his hands in high good humour; "but we shall now get on in a twinkling, — and a superb evening we shall have for the ride."

"We kept you waiting!"— but our wrath was overmastered by the fear that the mistake might have arisen from some foreign sin in our *cackeology;* and mounting the box, we took our seat with great gravity.

"Are you ready?" bawled we, at the end of a quarter of an hour.

"*Tout de suite!*" answered the faithless conducteur, from the interior of the auberge.

"Are you ready?" repeated we, after the lapse of the same space of time.

"*Tout de suite!*" replied the conducteur. We seized the whip, and inflicted a flogging upon the horse of the patache; but, like the mule in Tristram Shandy, he only wagged his tail.

"Get on, you Houyhnhnm!" exclaimed we. The animal coughed banteringly.

"*Yee!*" cried we, remembering that word of power, which acts like a spell upon a French horse,—and straightway he set off, in the monotonous jog-trot which belongs to his vocation. With a volley of "*sacrés!*" bursting through masses of bread, cheese, and garlic, with which his mouth was filled, the conducteur rushed after us; but by the repeated application of the magic "*Yee!*" we had the satisfaction of giving him a good hot run before he could come up with us. The *mistake* of the rascal was explained by our finding ourselves the only passenger; for your patache is fond of company, and will rarely stir till well filled.

In spite of the coming dusk, one hour of the ride was delightful. The ranks of tall silent poplars sentinelling the banks added a charm to the picture which

seemed quite original. On one side were the interminable vineyards of the Loire, already covered with the film of early twilight, stretching far into the distance; and on the other the river itself, as smooth as polished silver, glittered hazily in the last rays of sunset. The water was spread out in the form of a lake, and for some time steeped in those gorgeous but delicate hues with which Turner delights to glorify his landscapes. By degrees this began to fade. The glow grew colder, the light dimmer. A grey, hazy mantle, unfolding itself imperceptibly, flowed from east to west. The vineyards vanished; the river rolled in vapour; tint after tint faded in the sky; the poplars themselves grew black and indefinite; and in a little while the whole world was buried in gloom.

CHAPTER II.

THE GARDEN OF FRANCE.

We passed in the dark the two villages of Chousy and Veuves, between which, on the opposite side of the river, is the Château de Chaumont, where the "she-wolf," Catherine de Medicis, amused herself with astrology. Soon after passing Veuves, a wooden *terminus* informs the traveller that another step will lead him from the department of the Loire-et-Cher into that of the Indre-et-Loire, surnamed the Garden of France.

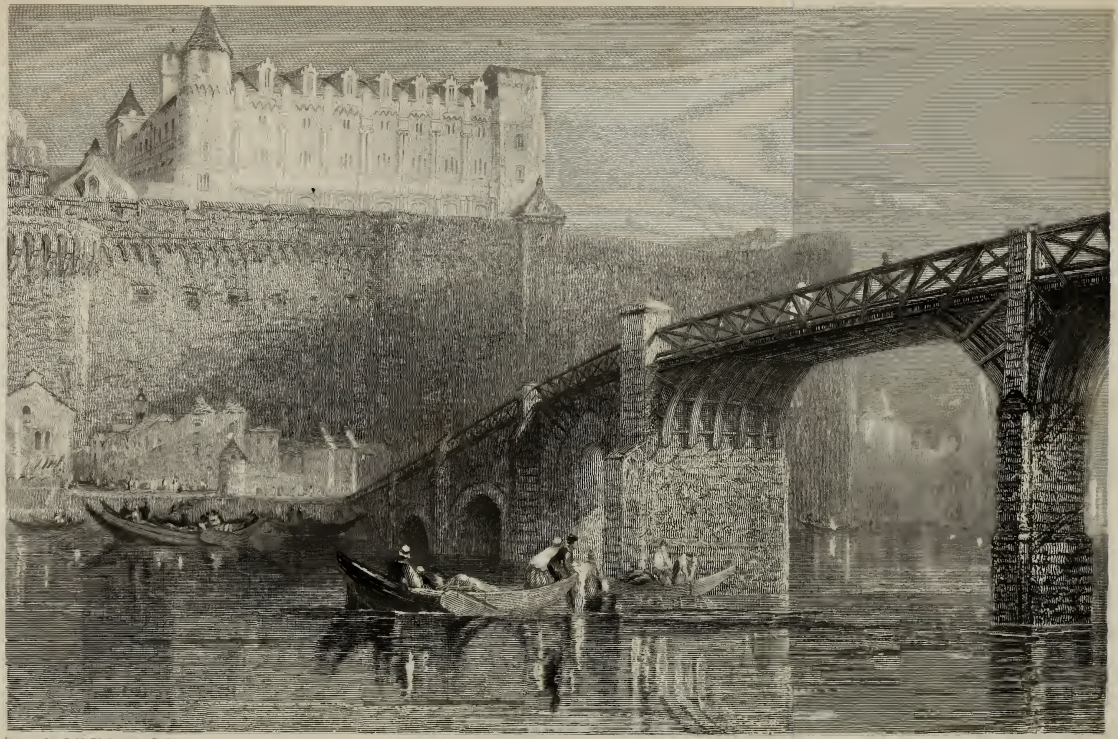
Our introduction into this garden was none of the most pleasant; for here we felt the inconveniences of the road, beautiful though it be in the day-time, which is carried along the narrow summit of the levée. The conducteur was oppressed with irresistible drowsiness, and, in spite of our efforts, was continually falling asleep. It was in vain to argue with ourselves that the same thing had in all probability happened to him every night for the last twenty years; and that, at any rate, of the two animals, the horse was the better *conducteur*. This might have sufficed had there been even moonlight; but in utter darkness, and with the sullen voice of the waters below in our ear, it sounded like sophistry.

After a ride of nine leagues, we at length heard with satisfaction the stern *Qui vive?* of a sentry, and found that we were about to enter Amboise. Some detention took place, on account of a woman, who had joined us on the road, claiming her privilege of sex to travel without a passport; but all at length being satisfactorily arranged, we found ourselves rumbling through the dark streets of the town, and soon after fairly landed in a court-yard. The buildings which formed the sides of the area looked like old farm-houses crumbling into ruin; and even at that untimely hour, we were on the point of bribing the conducteur to find us another lodging. At the moment, however, a young woman holding up the lantern to inspect the face of the traveller, who, she had been told, was a specimen of that wonderful wild-fowl called an Englishman, disclosed her own. The view decided us; for Elise was by far the prettiest Frenchwoman we had seen on this journey; and it was in a voice of passing sweetness she inquired, "Would monsieur have the benevolence to walk in?"

When monsieur did walk in, he found himself in a kitchen, the walls of which were hollowed out into beds, each affording audible testimony that it was occupied by more than one sleeper. The next question was, "Whether monsieur would have the condescension to warm himself at the fire, while the cloth for supper was laid in the salle?" and having acceded to so reasonable a proposal, we were soon after ushered into the said salle, which was a large, cold room, garnished with deal tables and forms. One of the tables, however, was covered with a cloth of the purest white, with plates of

beautiful porcelain, and silver forks and spoons; and in a few minutes we were completely reassured by the appearance of a most amiable-looking chicken, a bottle of excellent wine, and abundance of cherries and strawberries.

After supper, having spent some minutes in cogitating on the strange mixture of meanness, comfort, and substantial wealth so often to be found in France, in the houses destined for the reception of the humbler class of travellers, of which this one may be taken as a fair specimen, we were conducted to our sleeping apartment, and left alone for the night. The room was of that class which we have often met with in ancient castles—large, lofty, and dreary, with narrow, curtainless windows. The paper, painted with scenes of history or romance, was not pasted upon the wall, as in England, but on a sort of cloth resembling minute network, suspended from the ceiling, and which hung down in torn masses, like old tapestry. When we went to fasten the door, we found that it had neither lock nor bolt; and on opening another, likewise without fastening, resembling the door of a cupboard, several feet from the floor, we looked down into an abyss, in which we could see only a steep and broken stair, descending till it was lost in darkness. This was altogether very odd. Our memory straightway produced, for our entertainment, a thousand fearful dramas of which an inn had been the theatre; and we began to think with loathing upon the syren tones of Elise, and to curse our fatal admiration of female beauty. There was still a third door, and this we opened with no small interest.



Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Engraved by J. B. Allen

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R. A.

Engraved by W. R.

It led into a room resembling our own, furnished with four or five beds, all occupied by wearied travellers buried in profound sleep. "Ah!" muttered we, "this is no den of robbers! We ought to have concluded, from the very absence of the means, or shew of security, that there was nothing to apprehend!" and so saying, we tumbled into an excellent bed, and after a little moralising on the blessings of poverty, passed quickly into the land of dreams.

The town of Amboise consists of a heap of narrow and confused streets, built at the base of a hill, which sweeps down towards the river, terminating abruptly in perpendicular cliffs, both in front and at the sides. On the brow of this hill, next the Loire, stands the château, flanked by two enormous towers, carried up from the base of the cliffs. The origin of the château is supposed to have been a fort built by Cæsar on the hill; and in collateral proof of this fact are shewn some subterranean vaults by the side of the hill, near the ancient convent of Minimes, which appear to have been the granaries of the Roman troops.

The present château is a very elegant building, and the towers, constructed by Anne of Brittany, are exceedingly curious. By one of them, you can mount on horseback to the summit of the rock; and in the other, there is a convenient carriage-way, by means of which you are set down, without any very fatiguing ascent, in the castle-yard. The latter we perambulated ourselves; and as it is newly plastered in stucco, and well lighted, the walk was far from being disagreeable. Midway there are some doorways in the sides of the passage,

which lead, as you are told, into the subterranean dungeons of Louis XI.; but which, without a torch, it would neither be pleasant nor safe to explore.

On reaching the summit of the rock, you find it laid out in walks and gardens to some distance round the château. One of the most pleasing objects in these is a small chapel, covered with sculpture, which has been deprived of all the insignia of worship, except the colossal antlers of a stag — once the objects of every traveller's devotion, as the identical antlers of "the famous stag hunted and killed by Cæsar." M. de Villiers, when told the story by his guide, amused himself by pointing out the mark of the *bullet*, and, in his journal, by triumphing over M. Millin, who declares that the enormous antlers are no longer to be seen, and that, even if visible, they would not be worth looking at, being merely a *cento* of various horns united in inlaid work. "It is only the former half of this double assertion," says M. de Villiers, "that is true; for the stag's antlers *are* of inlaid work, and they are *not* invisible." Alas! how hard is our fate, which obliges us to contradict both these learned Thebans, and to say that the aforesaid antlers are still extant in the chapel, and that they are manufactured, not of inlaid pieces of horn, but of walnut-wood.

The view from various parts of the walks is exceedingly fine, comprehending Blois on one side, and Tours on the other. Beyond the gardens the hill is one vast vineyard, divided only by foot-paths; and, descending by rude flights of stairs at the sides, you find yourself traversing a subterranean village,

the houses of which are excavated from the solid rock.

Among the objects seen from the summit is a pagoda, about half a league to the south. This is all that remains of the magnificent castle of Chanteloup, which was bought in 1823 by some trading blockhead, who wished to turn the penny by the old stones and timber. It was the place of exile of the Duc de Choiseul, who was sent there to meditate by Louis XV., and who consoled himself by setting up the head of Voltaire as a weathercock, in order to be reminded perpetually of the adulations he had received from that discreet philosopher in the "Huron." From this castle, also, the Princess de Lamballe hurried for refuge to the capital, and found it on the guillotine. Close by is the first "English garden" that was planted in France, and which exhibits a collection of foreign trees said to be unrivalled in Europe. From other points, the view is not less interesting. The right bank of the Loire, covered with gardens and vineyards, appears, as the *opposite* bank usually does, the more agreeable of the two. The river, extending to the right and left, is only lost at Tours on the one hand, and at Blois on the other. Below, at your feet, is the Ile de St. Jean, formerly called the Ile d'Or, celebrated as the place of interview between Clovis I. and Alaric the Visigoth.

The diligence, which does not cross the river at Amboise at all, follows the levée, on the right bank, to Tours; and, for this reason, *we* chose to continue our wanderings on the left bank. The road runs almost at the water's edge, and, after a little while, is built in, as

it were, by cliffs, in which numerous vaults, excavated in the rocks, serve as wine-cellars, or other store-houses. The islands, as we descend, become more numerous, and more gorgeously wooded. On the right bank, villas and villages, intermingled with groves and vineyards, enrich the picture; the houses are more trim and more tasteful; the people more cheerful and more gaily dressed; the river is broad and radiant, dimpling into smiles, and singing joyously as it flows; every thing shews that we are really in this rich, this beautiful Touraine, which is styled the Garden of France.

The villages on the right bank are Négron, La Frillière, Vouvrai, with the château of Moncontour above, and Roche-Corbon; but at length the line of houses appears to be uninterrupted, and to form the suburbs of the city. Long before this, however, our eyes were fascinated by an object in the distance, rising tall and lonely in the midst of what appeared to be a dead plain. This was the tower, or rather both towers of a cathedral, the gigantic size of which was probably exaggerated by some atmospheric influence. Such a structure could not belong to the wilderness: it doubtless arose among one of the great congregations of the abodes of men; but no other building was near, and the trees that skirted the horizon looked like bushes beside it.

As we advanced, the towers seemed to rise, like the rigging of a ship at sea, when as yet the hull is beneath the circle. Soon the body of the edifice, appearing slowly, stood heavy and colossal before us; then some smaller towers and spires shot up around it; and at

length a city filled the space which to our imagination had seemed the precincts of a solitary temple.

There is no city in France which presents a more splendid approach than Tours: more particularly when you enter by the right bank, crossing a bridge, which has been compared to our own majestic Waterloo — nothing can be grander than the effect.* The Rue Royale, a broad and elegant street, continuing the line of the bridge, traverses the town in its whole breadth; and at the end of the vista you see the avenue of Grammont, the commencement of the great road to Bourdeaux, issuing as if from the trees of the ramparts. The bridge is composed of fifteen flattened arches, each seventy-five feet wide, and is perfectly straight. In front, and commencing the Rue Royale, are the Hôtel de Ville on the right, and the Museum on the left — two very handsome buildings, the latter only just finished.

When you have traversed this straight line, however, from the river to the ramparts, you have seen nearly all of modern elegance that Tours can boast. The other streets, generally speaking, are dark and mean; and, with the exception of a few old buildings and ruins, magnificent in themselves, you must be satisfied with the associations of antiquity.

It was market-day when we arrived, and our cus-

* "It is the handsomest bridge," says M. de Villiers, "not only in France, but in Europe; and the handsomest bridge in Europe must be the handsomest in the world." After seeing Waterloo Bridge, he adds, that he did not think it handsomer than that of Tours. This is all very natural.

tomary *blind* wanderings, with which we delight to commence the survey of a foreign town, were not uninteresting. The peasants of Touraine, without being strikingly handsome, are less coarse and vulgar in their physiognomy than those of any other country we know. They seem pleased, without being gay, and their frames are strong and well made, without being robust. The Count de Vigny, in his romance of " Cinq Mars," so celebrated on the continent, has drawn their character, both moral and physical, in a few masterly touches. " The good Tourangeaux," says he, " are mild, like the air they breathe, and strong, like the soil they cultivate. We see in their sun-burnt faces neither the cold immobility of the north, nor the lively grimace of the south. Their features, as well as their minds, exhibit something of the candour of the true people of Saint Louis; their long chestnut hair circles round the ears, like that of the statues of our ancient kings; their language is pure, without drawl, hurry, or peculiarity of accent; and their country is at once the cradle of the French tongue and of the French monarchy."

It seems as if the axiom of Tasso was correct—

> " La terra molle, e licta, e dilettosa,
> Simili a se gli habitori produce;"

for certainly we never saw elsewhere so many external traces of amiability of character. The only *rumbustious* individual in the whole crowd was an itinerant tooth-drawer; and he, we could swear, was a Parisian. His equipage was not an uncommon one in France for this class of artists. He drove into the middle of the press

in a handsome open carriage, with a servant in livery behind, alternately blowing a trumpet, beating a drum, and exclaiming, "Room for the celebrated doctor!" The horse was then dismissed, the carriage converted at once into a stage and a shop, and the great man commenced his harangue.

He expatiated on the grandeur and importance of the art of tooth-drawing—on his own unrivalled skill, renowned throughout all Europe—on the infatuation of those unhappy beings who delayed even for a single instant to take advantage of an opportunity thus offered to them by Providence. He flourished his iron instrument in the air, comparing it to the rod of Aaron: he likened the listeners themselves to a crowd of infidels of old, gathering about an apostle, and struggling sinfully, not only against his word, but in spite of their own teeth. "Alas! my friends," said he, "when I shall have turned my back, you will repent in dust and ashes; but repentance will then be too late. You fancy you have not the toothach! Poor creatures! my bosom bleeds for you! In your culpable ignorance you believe that no one is unwell who is not in an agony of pain. You imagine that pain is the disease, whereas it is only one of the symptoms; and yet I see by the faces of many of you—I may say of most of you—that you have not only the toothach, but the symptomatic twinge. This is the case with you and you, and you, and more than you. Tell me, am I not correct? Only think of your gums! Do you not feel a sensation of tickling, as it were, at the root of your teeth, or of coldness at the top, as if the air was already penetrating through the

breaches of time or disease? This is the toothach. This sensation will increase, till it ends in torture and despair. Then you will inquire for the doctor, but the doctor will not hear: then you will intrust the operation to some miserable quack, who will break your jaws in pieces; or, if you endure in silence, the pain will produce fever—fever will bring on madness—and madness terminate in death!" His eloquence was irresistible: in ten minutes every soul of us had the toothach.

Several sufferers rushed forward at the same instant to crave relief. One of them, a fine-looking young fellow, gained the race; but not till he had broken from the arms of a peasant girl, who, having either less faith or more philosophy, implored him to consider, in the first place, whether he had really the toothach. Grimly smiled the doctor when the head of the patient was fairly between his knees; and ruefully did the latter gaze up from the helpless position into his executioner's face. We all looked with open mouths and in dead silence upon the scene, all except the young girl, who, with averted head, awaited, pale, trembling, and in tears, the event.

The doctor examined the unfortunate mouth, and adjusted his instrument to the tooth which it was his pleasure to extract. The crowd set their teeth, grinned horribly, and awaited the wrench; but the operator, withdrawing his hand, recommenced the lecture with greater unction than ever. A second time was this unmerciful reprieve granted, and then a third time, and the condemned groaned aloud. We could stand no more: we were already in a paroxysm of the tooth-

ach ; and feeling a strange fascination creeping over us as we looked upon the glittering steel, we fairly took to our heels, and fled from the spot.

We speedily gained the ramparts, which extend round three sides of the town, the fourth being protected by the river. These were crowded with persons of the lower ranks of society, but, in general, well dressed, and not greatly different in appearance from the Sunday folks of London, except in the gorgeous lace-caps worn by the women in lieu of bonnets. Some were drinking eau sucrée, or limonade, on the benches, or in a temporary café ; others strolling in pairs or families through the wooded avenues ; and others gazing into the gardens and vineyards on the outer side below the ramparts. There was no noise more dissonant than the music of a distant band, and no expression of merriment more boisterous than a good-humoured laugh. Beyond the city, the view was carried over fertile fields, luxuriant groves, and shining waters ; and the setting sun now steeped this beautiful Touraine in his richest and yet tenderest radiance. As the shades of evening fell upon the scene, the company began to disperse, till at length there were seen only a few individuals gliding in pairs through the gloom; and instead of the buz of conversation, we heard only a soft low whisper as we passed.

The next day being Sunday, we thought it could not be more appropriately spent than in wandering churchward.

St. Gatien was the first bishop of Tours ; but his church, like those of Scripture, was composed of the people of God, and not of stone walls. The persecutions

of the Pagans compelled him to perform his ministry in woods and caverns; and this, perhaps, was the origin of the curious excavations in the neighbourhood of the town, which we shall hereafter notice. His successor, St. Lidoire, found the times so much better, that he was able to build a chapel in his own house; and here St. Martin was elected and consecrated, who afterwards enlarged the edifice, and transferred to it the body of the first bishop. This church of St. Martin having fallen into decay in its turn, was rebuilt by St. Gregoire, who consecrated it in honour of the holy martyrs of the Theban legion; and about the middle of the twelfth century, being again in ruins, it was re-erected anew; but so slowly, that it was not completed in its present form till the beginning of the sixteenth century. The appearance of the church is venerable and majestic; and its two ancient towers being loftier than the other buildings, are the landmarks of the traveller from an immense distance.

On arriving within a short space of this remarkable monument, the concourse of people crowding towards it, all dressed in their holiday apparel, was so much greater than we had ever seen before in this country, that we imagined the day must be some great festival of the Catholic church. Nor were we altogether mistaken; for we found it was the Sunday after the Fête Dieu; and they were in the act of preparing for one of those beautiful and solemn processions round the altar, to which, in our opinion, ought mainly to be attributed the continuance of the Romish superstition in France.

The spectators were almost entirely women; and, indeed, the little religion that remains in the country is confined exclusively to this sex. Their imaginations are more easily impressible than ours, their faith purer and more confiding; and thus the grand and touching ceremonies of the Catholic church, while they excite the sneers of a man, set the heart of a woman beating with *devotion*, which, in her, is neither a sentiment nor a principle, but a passion.

The chancel was covered with a rich carpet, and thickly strewed with roses, which filled the atmosphere with a delicious perfume; numerous ranks of priests knelt within in profound silence; the lay actors in the pageant had already assumed their stations; and at a signal from the archbishop, a hymn burst suddenly from the lips of the ministering servants of the altar, a blast of the trumpet shook the dome, the awful swell of the organ rose wildly in the air, and the array began to move.

First appeared the banner of the church of Tours, borne by two priests, inscribed on one side "Sancte Gatiene, ora pro nobis!" and on the other, "Sancte Martine, ora pro nobis!" and by a beautiful and touching contrivance, worthy of a purer worship, the orphan girls of the Congregation of Providence came next. They were dressed in a coarse stuff gown, of a reddish-purple colour, with a white handkerchief drawn round the neck and crossed upon the bosom, and a coarse white muslin cap and veil. Some were pretty, but all interesting, from the exquisite simplicity of their appearance. Then came the young girls of the city who

had taken their first communion at the Fête Dieu, all dressed alike, as sisters in God, in a white dress and veil, but all exhibiting, in the costliness or poverty of the materials, the difference in their worldly circumstances.

The pensionnaires of the nuns of Saint Ursula were next; then those of the nuns of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Sacrament; and after these, the Congregation of the Ladies of the Trinity, and the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. All these young ladies wore white muslin dresses, with richly-embroidered caps and veils of the same colour; but the different congregations were identified by little distinctions, such as pale pink shoes instead of white kid, a chaplet of white flowers wreathed round the brow, or a light blue riband inserted in the plaits of the cap or gown.

The most interesting individual of the whole was an infant of about three years of age, dressed like the others, and tripping along as solemnly as any beauty of nineteen among them. Her appearance drew forth the expression of that national feeling of affection for children which makes a Frenchwoman appear so amiable and delightful. Every heart seemed, in the common phrase, to *warm* towards the little devotee; every face brightened into a smile of love and encouragement as she passed; some made signs to her; all were anxious to touch her, to pat her shoulder, to kiss her hand.

Then came the boys of the different congregations of charity or education, offering a striking contrast, by their saucy, sunny looks, and careless or rebellious air and demeanour, to their grave, demure, modest, pale,

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R. A.

Engraved by R. Wallis

and pretty sisters. A troop of priests succeeded, dressed in black robes hung with white muslin; and a still more numerous one, in crimson velvet and cloth of gold. These were followed by the great silver crucifix and the various archiepiscopal insignia, such as the crook, the mitre, &c.; and at length four priests appeared, turning round ever and anon, to walk backwards before the incarnate Deity, and fling up their censers, which emitted a thick smoke, and enriched the air with perfume.

The dais underneath which the archbishop walked, carrying the divine body in his hand, in a silver shrine, was a square canopy of purple velvet, embroidered and fringed with gold. As it passed, the spectators sunk upon their knees, as if struck by a sudden enchantment. Some clasped their hands—some smote their bosoms—some touched the pavement with their brow. Young mothers rushed into the ranks of the procession, and laid down their first-born before the dais, that the blood of the Lamb of God might roll over their little ones, and wash away the taint of sin and misery which they had received even in the womb.

So vast was this procession, that notwithstanding the magnitude of the church, the two ends met; and one looking down upon the scene must have imagined it to be some mystic dance circling round the temple. It formed, upon the whole, a solemn and remarkable, not to say sublime spectacle, and was admirably well calculated to touch the youthful imagination.

In the opposite view of the city, besides the towers of the metropolitan church, there are seen on the right

two smaller monuments. These are all that remain of the church of Saint Martin, which once ranked among the greatest and most magnificent in the kingdom. The nucleus of this edifice was a little chapel raised by Saint Brice over the tomb of his predecessor, the former saint; and so numerous and generous were the devotees who crowded to pray within the precincts of the apostle's grave, that in the fifth century Saint Perpete was able to convert the chapel into a magnificent temple. Several times burnt, and always rebuilt, it at length fairly fell to pieces in 1797, leaving only the clock-tower and the tower of Charlemagne to attest its ancient grandeur.

The church of Saint Julian is remarkable for little more than the "base uses" to which it has returned at last. In the engraving, the spectator is supposed to stand in the court, or at the back windows of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, of which the desecrated temple forms the stables and coach-houses. The old church of Notre Dame la Riche we found falling into ruins. The silence, when we entered, was like that of the grave, and the only worshippers were some Sisters of Charity, who knelt as mute and motionless as statues. We felt that we were an intruder; and as we hurried away, the tread of our feet echoing along the pavement, sounded like a profanation.

The château of Tours, an imperial palace under the Romans, is to-day a vast enclosure, containing stables and military barracks. The Tour de Guise, in which the son of Balafré was imprisoned in the wars of the League, still remains; but a few sculptured stones and broken columns are the only other testimonials of its

Drawn by [illegible] M. W. Fosner R. A. Engraved by W. [illegible]

ancient grandeur. At the introduction of Christianity into Touraine, the walls of the château still enclosed several pagan temples, the demolition of which is usually attributed to Saint Martin, who warred not only with ideas, but stones.

The library placed in the buildings of the Préfecture is rich in old books and manuscripts; and the museum boasts a collection of very valuable pictures. Both these establishments are open to the public; but we fear it is not the fashion here to admire the arts, as we saw, on our several visits to the gallery, only a few individuals of the lower classes. The archiepiscopal palace is a beautiful modern building, and the Turonian Bazaar an agreeable lounge; and this is all that need be said, in a sketch like ours, of the interior of the city.

The château of Plessis-les-Tours, formerly called the Montels, celebrated as the den of one of the most curious animals mentioned in natural history, stands among fields and gardens, a short walk westward of the town. This creature was the eleventh Louis of France. The château was surrounded by walls, entered only by a single wicket, and defended by iron spits pointed outwards, and a trellis of thick iron bars. Cross-bowmen were stationed day and night behind the walls, with orders to fire without ceremony on any one who might be seen approaching after a certain hour; and four hundred archers formed a perpetual guard and patrol. The trees round this formidable lair were decorated with dead bodies hanging by the neck; and, as an old author writes, "les prisons et autres maisons

circonvoisines étoient pleines de prisonniers, lesquels on oyoit bien souvent, de jour et de nuict, crier pour les tourmens qu'on leur faisoit."* To torment, however, and to hang, were occasionally troublesome, when the number of victims was great; and the worthy Tristan, therefore, the provost-marshal, was under the necessity of sometimes emptying the prisons at once, and drowning their denizens wholesale in the neighbouring river.

The Cardinal de la Balue had the merit of fabricating for Louis an iron cage, no doubt for the purpose of enabling him to hear the imprisoned birds "sing in anguish," as Gineus de Passamonte or his companions express it; and the monarch, considering wisely that the most proper person to experimentalise upon was the inventor himself, shut him up in it for fourteen years. The character of Louis, indeed, was made up of this kind of practical wit. He delighted in contrasts, surprises, and what may be called circumstantial puns. One day, on entering a church, he found a poor, ragged, miserable priest lying asleep before the gate, basking like a dog in the sun. He instantly awoke him, and presented him with a rich benefice, for the purpose of verifying the proverb, "A qui est heureux, le bonheur vient en dormant."

On another occasion, hearing a company of hogs making as much noise as if they were possessed by the devils of the Gergesenes, he ordered the Abbé de Baigne, who had a taste for music, to contrive an instrument by which these discordant materials might be made to

* Claude de Seyssel.

produce harmony. The abbé accordingly collected an orchestra of such performers, from the thin, sucking treble of infancy, to the bassoon grunt of old age, and enclosed them in a line of stalls under a pavilion. An instrument like a pianoforte stood before the entrance, its surface divided into musical keys, and each key connected with the stall of its proper pig. The concert then began. When the abbé struck the keys, a prong set in motion produced the required note, which was probably flat or sharp, according to the force of the blow; and, as Bouchet, the historian of Aquitaine, tells us, "made the performers squeak in such order and consonance as greatly to delight the king and his whole court."

Louis despised the outward splendours of his rank; and when he had occasion to meet another king, took more especial care to be meanly and clownishly dressed. This was a taste, not an affectation; for in the same way his feelings ran counter to those of other men, even on subjects that are supposed to be under the direction of Nature herself. He rejoiced openly at the death of his father; and instead of putting his courtiers into mourning, made them wear white and carnation. He murdered his brother, as several authors agree; and he disposed of his daughters in marriage, in the way he thought best calculated to secure them the greatest *quantum* of misery.

This prince was religious. He wore relics and little images constantly about his person; and when sick, apparently to death, sent for St. Francis de Paolo from Italy, to assist him with his prayers, and with flatteries

and supplications, grovelled at his feet, and overwhelmed him with presents. He made other presents, however, of an odder nature. He executed a deed, entitled, "Transfer from Louis XI. to the Virgin Mary of Boulogne, of the right and title of fief and homage for the county of Boulogne, to be delivered by his successors before the image of the said Lady." This, it must be confessed, was a pleasant sort of generosity. "Was the king less Count of Boulogne," asks the Abbé de St. Real, "for having thus given away the county? Would the bailiffs, provosts, and other officers of the estate be less the bailiffs, &c. of the king, for being called the bailiffs of the Virgin?"

The closing scene at last came, when saints and gifts could be of no use; and the evening of this man's dreadful day set in in darkness and terror. He could not bear the name or the idea of death. At the terrible word, he hid himself under the bed-clothes, as if it had conjured up a phantom on which he dared not look.

"I am not so ill as you think," groaned he; "I shall still live—God will prolong my life!" He sent abroad, all over Europe, for strange animals wherewith to amuse his convalescence—to deceive the world, say the historians—to deceive himself, say we. He turned off a servant for having presumed to prevent him forcibly from throwing himself out of the window, in a fit of delirium—"which shews that his love of power mastered even his fear of death," say the historians—which shews no such thing, say we. The servant would have been retained if there had been the smallest chance of such a service being required from him again;

but Louis, we have not a doubt, took care to *bar* the windows, and could thus afford to play the tyrant without risk. The miserable wretch died at length in horror and despair.

The château of Plessis is to-day a plain brick house, like a great barn, although furnished with a square tower, resembling the chimney of a manufactory, rising from the side to about half the height of the building above the roof. The area within the precincts of this den of tyranny must have been extensive, as the fragments of the old wall remaining still testify. The wall, however, does not appear to have been more than eleven or twelve feet high. The river Cher is at a short distance; but the banks, both here and elsewhere in the neighbourhood of Tours, are tame and uninteresting.

Nearly the same distance, at the opposite end of the town, and on the opposite side of the river, are the ruins of the celebrated abbey of Marmoutiers, the date of which is anterior to that of the commencement of the French monarchy. The staircase is all that now exists even in tolerable preservation, and this last remains of the magnificent monument is fast crumbling away.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUBTERRANEANS.

We remember, during the late war, a Frenchman was usually caricatured as a little, meagre, famished creature; and it was therefore with some curiosity that, on our first journey to France, we watched the starvelings at their meals: nay, at the moment when this note goes down, we are still filled with curiosity as insatiable as their own appetite—curiosity to know how they contrive to *stow* all they eat. While we, with the national abstemiousness of John Bull, are concocting our journal over a concoction of coffee and boiled milk, the same individuals whom we are to meet at a luxurious dinner at five o'clock are busy with their morning meal (it being now between nine and ten) of soup, fish, fowl, joints, made-dishes, and dessert, with wine and beer. The stomach of a Frenchman is not only stronger than that of an Englishman, but more capacious. The latter is generally satisfied with a few glasses of wine during dinner, while the former consumes habitually, at the same meal, a quantity of wine and water, seldom amounting to a great deal less than half a gallon. A gentleman, the other day, took pains to account to the company for his extra appetite, informing them that it

was occasioned by his having eaten nothing that morning to breakfast—nothing save a few eggs.

As for the poorer classes, it is the same case with them in regard to quantity; but water forms the staple commodity both of their meat and drink. Almost any thing that grows in the fields, and thus deserves the name of a vegetable, suffices to make their soup; and if they can pour in a little milk, they think themselves feasted—not to talk of oil or butter, which form the *summum bonum* of their gastronomic ambition.

After breakfast, we sallied forth to wander along the right bank of the river, walking against the stream; and, while crossing the bridge, were again struck with the extreme magnificence of this entrance of the town, where the eye is carried from barrier to barrier, through a vista of houses resembling the more elegant streets of Edinburgh. A continual interchange of telegraphic signals appears to be carried on between the Hôtel de Ville and the barriers; yet, notwithstanding this, and the care of the gendarmes at the gate, it would be the easiest thing in the world for any one to enter the town unnoticed.

The peasant women we met on the road were not exactly pretty; but remarkably fine eyes, and a certain air which the French call *enjoué* (which does not amount to our English *joyous*), predisposes one in their favour, an expression of this kind being never found where the feelings are not naturally good. The only peculiarity we observed in their dress was, that they wore socks reaching to the ancles, and no stockings. What seemed odd, however, was, that they were all either young or

old: in fact, we did not see a single middle-aged woman of this class in Touraine. The sex here has no twilight: all are young and reasonably fair; or old, haggard, and wrinkled. The latter go about in crowds of twenty or thirty, or more, with faces that you would expect to find surmounting the cross of a crutch. Most of them, however, are still young, according to the computation of time: they do not lose their activity with their youthful looks, but are as healthy and sprightly as ever.

While pondering on this peculiarity, we had fallen into what is elegantly termed a brown study, from which we were awakened by the *Qui vive?* of a sentinel. We found, on looking up, that we were in the middle of a village, and that our challenger was a peasant in the belts of the national guard, over his working apparel, and armed with an old musket. It was in vain to say that we were only "taking a walk;" for the French, at least those in authority, never can comprehend this expression, render it into what idiom you will; and, after arguing the matter a little, we were obliged to produce our passport. When he had gained his point, the *factionnaire* seized the document, and looked at it upside and downside for some time.

"But I cannot read!" said he at last.

"What is that to me?"

"Every thing," he replied; "for I must trouble you to do me the honour of accompanying me to Monsieur le Maire, who *can* read all sorts of written hand." It was in vain to dispute. The sentinel, anxious to discharge his duty, deserted his post, and marched us, prisoner fashion, to the other end of the village, where

a little old man, like a journeyman tailor, having perused the passport from end to end, we were set at liberty.

This, however, was not half so bad as a similar adventure we fell in with in Normandy, when, in "taking a walk," we rummaged our pockets in vain for the required passport. On that occasion, we were incarcerated a whole day in the prison of the village of May, guarded by two peasants armed with fowling-pieces; and at length, when an express returned with a certificate from the mayor of the district where we were known, setting forth that we were a peaceable and harmless vagabond, we were dismissed with the empty honour of three cheers from the villagers, and a hint from the magistrate to remember that he had generously offered to console our captivity with soup and wine. The truth is, the whole system is so modified in its operation by the character of the individual agents, that it varies in every *mairie;* and the only thing one is sure of is, that it at least *may* be made at once oppressive and absurd. In our present walk, we were an innocent victim of brown study; for if, being guilty, we had dreaded falling into the snare of the fowler, we could easily have gone round by the beach or the rocks.

Our thoughts being recalled, by the little incident we have related, to the external circumstance of our situation, we began to open our eyes, and look about us. The road winds almost at the base of a line of lofty and precipitous cliffs, crowned with vines; and while gazing at the rugged surface of the rock, in some places perpendicular, and in all inaccessible, we were startled by

an object midway between the top and bottom. The object disappeared, and we rubbed our eyes. There was a small round hole in the solid surface, more than a hundred feet above our head; and it was there we had seen the Appearance. A single moment sufficed for a glance at the locality, which presented nothing more than a bare, wild, and inaccessible steep, with a natural terrace near the bottom, covered with trees, vines, and flowers.

"Oho!" said we, switching our Pegasus; "no tricks upon travellers!" and turning away our head, we walked steadily on. But it would not do; for this animal is as slippery as the snakes of his mother Medusa, and our head twisted itself round, in spite of our teeth. It was no delusion. The little round hole had disappeared; and in its stead, shining down upon us, there was — a female face!

How long we remained rooted to the earth by the enchantment — what visions flashed or floated through our brain — what thoughts of love, and beauty, and romance, and wild adventure, and extravagant daring, and its rich and sweet reward, filled our heart to overflowing — it is impossible to say. Presently a thin, bluish smoke, coming out either from a fissure in the rock, or, for aught we knew, from the solid stone itself, began to curl round the fairy head, and conceal it from our view. The next moment the vapour was dispersed by a gust of wind; the spectre disappeared; and the little round hole remained — not open, however, as before, but neatly closed up with a common glass-window.

We now remembered having heard something of the inhabited rocks of Touraine; and with such data for our guidance, we were not slow in discovering, through the trees of the terraces, the doors and lower windows of these extraordinary dwellings. If the reader is well acquainted with German tradition; if, more especially, he has ever traversed, like us (we hope in many cases *with* us), the Wisperthal on the Rhine, he will easily comprehend how exciting to the imagination is such a scene. To see a column of smoke rising from the mid-surface of a perpendicular rock, or a human head looking down upon you from a height which no human foot could reach, is sufficiently strange in itself: but to those on whom it acts like a spell, conjuring up the spirits of old romance — the fairy beauties of the Wisper or Sauerthal, and the goblin-miners of the Taunus, with the fantastic glories of their cavern-palaces — it forms an exhibition to which, in all after-life, the mind, wearied with the turmoil of the world, flees away for relaxation and delight.

At the spot where these combinations and contradictions are the wildest and most numerous, there rises, on the summit of the steep, a square tower of great height, popularly called the Lanterne. It is a fragment of some ancient fort, which must once have proudly dominated the river. A still more curious monument remains at the entrance of the valley of Saint George, above Marmoutiers, mentioned at the end of the last chapter. It consists of a staircase of a hundred and twenty-two steps, in six flights, rising from a kind of court. The first two flights are dug out of the solid

rock; the next two are flanked by a mass of masonry of astonishing strength, and lighted by windows of various size; and the others, coasting round the steep to the summit, are vaulted in cut stone, and must have been supported by the body of the edifice of which they formed a part. What that edifice was, no one knows. It is neither mentioned in history nor tradition; and the ruins of its gigantic staircase impress the mind only with a vague idea of power, and strength, and grandeur, turned into a show and a mockery.

As we advanced, the subterranean village became more populous. Small terrace-gardens decorated the front; sometimes an outside stair led to the entrance of an upper floor; occasionally the rock was whitewashed or painted, so as to give the space the form of a house; and every where there seemed to reign ease and comfort. The interior of the houses we found to be, in most cases, convenient, and the apartments not a series of caverns, but of well-shaped rooms. These, in one or two instances, were hung with paper; but, in general, the dampness of the walls—not nearly so great, however, as might have been expected — seemed to prevent the use of this luxury. The inhabitants, we were told, are singularly healthy, and altogether unacquainted with the colds and rheumatisms which one would think they must inherit with their habitations. The chimneys, which in general are carried to the summit, no doubt contribute to keep the rock dry; and they also serve as funnels of communication between the vine-dresser, or gardener above, and his family below.

Several little valleys open here towards the river,

and the corner of one of them (which discharges a stream into the Loire) is completely honeycombed with the excavations we have described. The rocks on this spot are more huge and fantastic than elsewhere; and at a little distance, they might be taken, with their walls and windows, for some enormous fortification. While exploring the neighbourhood, we were told an anecdote by a vine-dresser, which we shall now endeavour to recollect, as it will convey a better idea than any picture we could draw ourselves of the habitations and manners of

THE SUBTERRANEANS.

SCENE I.

The rock village of this valley resembles, at a distance, as we have said, a fortification; but the difficulty is to obtain a distinct view of it at all. It is scarcely visible from the main road, and the valley, partaking more of the nature of a ravine, is so narrow and intricate, that you can rarely see much farther than a hundred yards in any one direction. When we say *ravine*, however, the word must be understood comparatively; for, with the exception of the line of inhabited rocks bordering the river, there is little in this district of the Loire which partakes even of the romantic.

The valley, notwithstanding, presents some very remarkable scenery. To a traveller winding along the rapid stream, at the bottom, its lofty, jagged sides

form the visible horizon. These are clothed with trees or vineyards; and, looking riverward, the vista is terminated on the left by a village church, perched upon the extreme point of the eminence, with its thin, glimmering spire rising high above the ridge; and on the right, by the battlemented summits of the inhabited rock. The view is at any time striking; but it touches the imagination more powerfully in

"The light of the moon, or the shadows of eve."

At the time we speak of, the rock was peopled by twenty families, amounting in all to about a hundred souls. Most of the men were day-labourers, and most of the women lace-knitters; but a few individuals possessed a portion of land, on which they cultivated wine, fruit, or vegetables, and thus obtained the enviable title of propriétaires: the very same distinctions, in fact, prevailed here as in other communities. To an unobservant eye, the villagers were all of one grade; but when you came to look close, you could perceive that some were rich, some poor, some vulgar, some genteel, some low-born, and even some noble.

As for the rich, they had little to do with the circulating medium; but they lived at their ease, and were not obliged to work for other people: they made their soup of the vegetables of their own garden, and could fish all day long, partly for sport, partly for their dinner. It was not so difficult as one might imagine to be a rich man at the Rock. A bunch of grapes and a luncheon of black bread were reckoned a handsome breakfast; while for dinner, if the soup was

coloured with milk, it was a genteel thing, which a morsel of bouilli, or a fried trout, converted into a feast. If at any time the garden vegetables were scarce, there was plenty of sorrel growing on the hills, and this, it is well known, is an excellent substitute: but indeed there was little risk of a truly rich man—that is, a propriétaire—being at a loss, since a single pumpkin could furnish a fortnight's pottage. Nor was this class, when they possessed a vineyard, under the necessity of selling or eating all their grapes: they made wine of a portion, which they kept in stone bottles, in a cellar that a prince might have envied. Their houses were distinguished by being whitewashed, or even painted, on the outside; while within there was sometimes one entire side of the wall papered, and occasionally even a mirror (such as would be reckoned an extravagance in London) over the mantel-piece.

As for the genteel order, that is not so easy to describe. A man here, as elsewhere, might be rich without being genteel, and poor without being vulgar. The best specimen of the class, however, was a maiden lady, who, twenty years before, had been a dress-maker at Tours. Driven by a change of fashions, or perhaps by the loss of youthful charms, from the city, she sank first to the village of Roche-Corbon, and then to Vouvrai; from which, finding that there was no more chance for her in "houses built with hands," she removed finally to the Rock. Here at length she was happy, because every body admitted that she was a person of consequence. She set the fashions, made the dresses, established a school of politesse, and was the *magistra morum*

of the community. Mademoiselle Jaqueline was decidedly genteel.

But the *noble!* Yes, even here we have nobility. M. de Tournoy was the grandson of a count; and although his father had been disowned, and cast off to beggary by the family for a low marriage, and even although the title had been extinguished and the estates confiscated during the revolution, yet he was not the less respected as a scion of the old noblesse. He received an annual present of a few bottles of wine from the rich, and the services of the poor were always at his command. Nor did these compliments pass without return; for M. de Tournoy had studied medicine in his youth, and although his father's resources had completely failed before his education was half finished, the knowledge he *had* acquired, if too small for the world at large, was fully adequate to the treatment of the few and simple diseases of the Rock.

As we have said that this community was formed of the same component parts as every other, so in like manner its history was made up of the same materials. There were loves and hatreds, cabals, jealousies, marrying and giving in marriage, sickness, and death. But, as M. Villemain remarks of the republics of ancient Greece, every thing was carried on in such an out-of-doors manner, and every body was so well acquainted with every body, and so constantly in the sight of each other, that there was little room for the development of the romantic, either in feelings or circumstances. The time, however, was now fast approaching when an occurrence was to take place on this very spot, strange,

awful, startling, and magnificent; and, as if in unconscious preparation, the moral agents of the catastrophe had already set to work in men's bosoms. Here, therefore, have we chosen our scene and our *dramatis personæ*, in spite of the scoffs of the fashionable world; here shall we shew that the operations of great nature may render human beings illustrious in any condition of life; and here, notwithstanding the obscurity of the actors we employ,

"Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralise our song."

Theodore Tournoy (for he did not care so much about the *de* as his father) being the handsomest and noblest youth in the village, and Madeleine Richard the prettiest and wealthiest girl, it was but natural that they should be set down, in the speculations of gossips, for lovers. They had been brought up, however, so much like brother and sister, that such ideas were slow of entering into their own minds. The time, indeed, of the change in the human affections, when sentiment ripens into passion, slipt by so imperceptibly, that Theodore and Madeleine would still have continued to think themselves a boy and a girl, had it not been for the whispers of their neighbours, and, above all, of Mademoiselle Jaqueline, the dress-maker. This lady was scandalised at the public intimacy which subsisted between a youth of nineteen and a maid of sixteen. She saw them, in walking to church, lose themselves for an hour together among the trees and vineyards of the valley; and, between her first and second sleep at night, she could hear the voice of Theodore at Made-

leine's window. This was monstrous. Her own reputation was concerned in protecting that of others; and she felt the improprieties of the young pair as matter of personal reproach to herself.

"My dear child," said she to the young lady, when they were alone, "these doings must not go on. If you were married, it would be another thing: you might then walk all day long in the valley, and listen to whom you pleased at your window at night. As it is, you are guilty of improprieties which reflect discredit even upon me, seeing that I have had the charge of your education;" and mademoiselle took snuff with dignity.

"Holy saints!" cried Madeleine, in astonishment; "where is the harm?"

"The harm," replied the dress-maker, "is in public opinion. Vice and virtue are conventional terms to signify any compliance with, or outrage of, the laws of genteel society. In the early ages of the world, there were things commanded and enforced which afterwards were denounced as deadly sins. This shews us that there is no system of morals in nature, but that we must be guided by expedience and opinion. No one can be right, *therefore*," deduced mademoiselle, laying a proper emphasis on the *igitur*, "without being in the fashion."

"It does one good to hear you talk," said Madeleine, suppressing a yawn; "but you know I never could exactly comprehend what you call philosophy."

"I shall teach you all in good time," said the mollified preceptress; "but, for the present, I lay

my injunctions upon you, that you never meet Theodore in private again till you are married to somebody else."

"Why not, I wonder?" thought Madeleine, as she walked away. "Till I am married to another!" Her young heart was troubled; and as the magic word "marriage," till now powerless and unmeaning, echoed for the first time through the depths of her imagination, she trembled and turned pale.

The next day was Sunday, and Madeleine walked demurely to church, without turning even her eyes to the right or the left.

"Are you unwell?" said Theodore anxiously.

"Yes—no."

"Are you angry with me?"

"No—yes."

"What have I done to offend you?"

"Nothing."

The youth was surprised, then vexed, then indignant. He knelt as far from her as the small area of the church would allow, and determined not to turn his head during the whole mass.

It so happened, however, that he did turn his head, and he saw that Madeleine was looking at him. When their eyes met, the eloquent blood mounted in a torrent to her face; and although she sunk suddenly on her knees behind her father, it had time to tell such a tale as made his blood run cold and hot alternately, till he was ready to faint. When they left the church, Madeleine walked on as before, without turning her head; but while passing a clump of trees, she felt her-

self suddenly lifted from her footing into the shadow of the foliage.

"Madeleine," said Theodore, "we have but an instant. I love you! Will you be mine?"

> "She gazed—she reddened like a rose,
> Syne pale as ony lily,"

she drooped her head on his shoulder, and wept away her emotions in a flood of tears. Theodore was that night, as usual, at Madeleine's little casement; but the slumbers of Mademoiselle Jaqueline were never again disturbed by their voices.

"There can be no harm in my chatting an hour with Theodore," thought the young lady, "since it does not outrage public opinion!"

M. Richard, who was a royalist of the old régime, hated abundantly Mademoiselle Jaqueline for being a "modern philosopher"—a sort of animal which is supposed by some people to bear the same proportion to the ancient species as the sophists did to the philo-sophists. He allowed, however, that she possessed talent, and that she was excessively genteel, and took good care, therefore, at all times to treasure up the advice, which he appeared to listen to with indifference. As for mademoiselle, she hated the royalist with a hatred which was not the less sincere because it was civil, and embraced with eagerness every opportunity of perplexing or alarming him. But it was not solely with this view that she gave him a friendly hint of the "improprieties" she had detected in the conduct of his daughter; although it is unnecessary just at pre-

sent to interrupt the narrative by explaining fully her policy.

When M. Richard's eyes were fairly opened to the fact that his daughter was fast growing, if she had not already grown, into a young woman, he saw with terror the precipice on which she stood. His friend, M. de Tournoy, was indeed a royalist, like himself, but he was nothing more. His profession was little wanted at the rock, and, in the eyes of a propriétaire at least, he was only a genteel beggar. The son had learnt to read and write, but he was not even a physician; and being too noble to work as a day-labourer, he had no resource. It was madness to think of matching his daughter in such a house; and M. Richard, in the fulness of his gratitude, forgot that Mademoiselle Jaqueline was a republican.

"You are too polite," said that philosophic lady. "My communication was entirely dictated by selfishness—the *primum mobile* of human action. I felt uneasy that a child of my own rearing, and the daughter of a respectable man like you, should throw herself away; and, to relieve my uneasiness, I resolved to save her. But as yet we have done nothing. It is clear that she has already thought of a lover, and we must therefore forthwith provide her a husband. A man of your standing might look to Vouvrai or Roche-Corbon; but, I do not know how it is, a strange degradation appears to have taken place in the society of these villages since the revolution."

"In consequence of it."

"Well, well. There is your neighbour, M. Bou-

cher — a worthy man, and a propriétaire, with a son —"

"What! the heavy, lumpish, silent, sullen lad?"

"He is modest. He thinks much, and works hard. He is of a substance that will bear polish; and I know, poor youth, that he only wants a gleam of encouragement to be at the feet of Madeleine."

"Well, we shall think of it. Thank you, mademoiselle; and if I can serve you in return — let me see — there is the half-dozen of wine I was about to send to M. Tournoy. Poor man! I have always thought him a little crazy, and of late he has become downright wild: it would be a sin to give him any thing that might tend to irritate his disorder, and I shall send the wine to you. Boucher! Well, I do begin to imagine that the lad Foulque thinks more than he says. Good morning. Let me see — there is the vineyard, the garden, and the best house in the Rock. What can he afford to give down? Adieu, mademoiselle!" and M. Richard, immersed in the speculations of a worldly mind, left the cottage.

"What can he afford to give down?" said mademoiselle to herself, with a triumphant smile. "Why, a new gown, and a new cap, and as much as a hundred sous beside — that is my fee! But here comes the bride, pale and in tears! and *before* marriage! What ails you, Madeleine?"

"I come to tell you sorrowful news! Poor M. de Tournoy has been taken suddenly ill, and is supposed to be dying."

"It is of pride, then."

"And Theodore — what will become of him? He passed me just now, with a look so sad, so wild, and yet to me so cold and bitter, that my heart died within me."

"It is all pride. The secret is this: the dreams of the old man about recovering the family property and title turn out to have more foundation than any of us supposed; and Theodore has humanity enough to try to wean you from your passion before the inevitable circumstances of his fortune compel him to cast you off." Madeleine neither started nor grew pale at this disclosure; the tears seemed to freeze in her eyes; her lips grew rigid; and in a cold and severe tone she replied,

"Mademoiselle Jaqueline, you forget yourself! I felt the alteration in Theodore's look, because he was a friend of my infancy; and I grieved for the illness of the old man, because he is a neighbour — nothing more;" and so saying, she turned round, and walked away with so stately a step, that mademoiselle did not dare to follow her.

The habitation of M. de Tournoy, in relation to the rest of the village, might be likened to the attics of a house. It was excavated from the highest part of the cliff, and hung as if suspended over those below, in a manner that would have seemed dangerous to a stranger. The only access to this dreary abode was by a steep, narrow, and winding stair, cut out of the solid rock, and leading from the terrace of M. Richard, to whom both houses actually belonged.

As Theodore sat that night by his father's bed-

side, while the sullen moaning of the wind without and the heavy breathing of the sick man within were the only sounds that disturbed the stillness of the hour, he might be said to have reflected for the first time in his life. His years had hitherto passed by, partly in the sleep of the intellectual faculties, and partly in the wild, fantastic dream which precedes their awaking. His eyes were now open; and he saw clearly his real situation, and trembled at the prospect. The dark and gusty night without, and his strange, comfortless, and desolate abode, seemed fitting emblems of his moral destiny. His father, who now lay senseless before him, had neglected to teach his son, or impress him with the necessity of learning, any rational pursuit; but instead, had filled his mind with the vague hopes and idle aspirings which in himself were only recollections, such as serve to amuse the meditations of feeble age. Theodore could read; but the accomplishment had as yet only enabled him to study the novels, of which an ample stock had been imported into the colony by Mademoiselle Jaqueline; and these, like the romances of Don Quixote, threatened to turn his brain, while they imparted both to his mind and manner a species of refinement altogether inconsistent with his station.

He had called that evening at the house of M. Richard, to inform him of his father's sudden illness; but as yet no one had come near them — not even Madeleine. The night wind had now died heavily away; the flame grew dim on the hearth; and in the silence and gloom of the moment a bitter feeling of solitude and desertion came over the heart of the watcher.

When at length he recalled his gaze from the chill and comfortless apartment, to fix it upon his father's face, he found him raising himself upon his elbow, and seeming to listen with a peculiar expression of mingled curiosity and horror. Theodore shuddered, he knew not why.

"Hark!" said the old man. "One—two—three—Hush!"

"What is it, dear father?"

"Hush!" The son listened, and presently was aware of a dull and measured sound, like that which might be produced by striking a small muffled bell. The sound was certainly not out of doors, and it could not be within the apartment. Was it in the roof? or in the walls? Theodore listened, till his hair began to rise upon his head in unconscious terror.

"What is it, father, in the name of God?" said he at last.

"It is the knell of the house of Tournoy!"

"It is perhaps the tick of the insect called the death-watch;" but he knew that the sound was altogether different.

"Listen!" said the old man, mustering all his strength. "I am departing, and the voices of the world of spirits are already in my ear. I know the toll of that muffled bell, and I know that it concerns the living as well as the dying. Wherever the sound is heard, that place is accursed; for it is the knell of earthly hope. I command thee, my son — and wo to thee if thou disobey! — to flee from this house of wrath before to-morrow's sun is high in the heavens!"

"I will not leave thee, father, even if thou curse me!"

"It is *I* who leave *thee*," said the old man, stretching out his trembling hand to seek for that of his son. Theodore felt that his father's hand was cold, and saw that the film of death was in his eye, and the damps of the grave upon his brow; and, choking with emotion, he knelt beside the pallet.

"Father," said he, "I will obey thee; I will descend into the world, since thou willest it, a stranger and a beggar!"

"Hush!" The death-peal sounded faster and faster; and the dying man, after listening for a moment, turned his head suddenly towards the window. Something white—it might have been a moonbeam—passed across the room; and when Theodore, who had looked round in terror, bent his eyes again upon his father, he saw that he was dead.

It was near midnight when Theodore rose from his knees beside the body, and he already began to prepare for his exile in the morning. He made up his very few articles of apparel in a bundle, and laying his father's staff across it, stood still to deliberate.

"I will see her *now*," said he at length. "It will be a better opportunity to explain than we shall have in the morning. It is impossible that the message I left at their house could have been faithfully delivered." He knelt again, and kissed the hand of the corpse; and then stealing out, as if afraid to disturb the slumbers of death, he glided down the stair, and stood at the lattice of Madeleine. The night was cold and still below; but

the moon hurried through the clouds, as if there was strife above. Theodore felt his heart sink as he attempted to knock at the window.

" Madeleine!" whispered he at length; and Madeleine threw open the casement.

" Is it Foulque Boucher?" she inquired aloud. The lover started as if stung by a serpent, and almost fell backward over the rock. The reason was explained why she had not come to see his dying father!

No," said he, in a choked voice: it is Theodore Tournoy. I am come to bid you adieu."

" God speed you!" she replied, after a moment's silence. " God speed you!" she repeated solemnly, and immediately shut the casement.

The next morning Theodore was awakened from a troubled slumber into which he had just fallen, with his head resting on his father's body, by an authoritative knock at the door.

" How is M. de Tournoy?" said M. Richard abruptly.

" My father is well," replied Theodore bitterly, without admitting the visitor.

" Can I speak with him?"

" He is *asleep!*"

" It is all one. I only wished to say, that as I have now occasion for more room, in consequence of my daughter's approaching nuptials, I think of connecting this cottage with the one below, by means of an inner stair, and inhabiting both. There is another, about a mile distant, which will suit your father quite

as well, and which is wholly at his service, if he will only do me the especial favour of removing immediately."

"I thank you," replied Theodore calmly; "we shall remove instantly."

"Nay, do not hurry yourselves. I would not put you to inconvenience for the world; and if a bottle or two of wine—"

"Oh! a thousand thanks. Good day."

"Good day."

Soon after, Theodore was seen descending the stair, with his father's body, laid out for the grave, upon his shoulders; and as he took the way to the church at the opposite corner of the valley, most of the villagers followed him in a kind of horror. Few of them had heard till now of the old man's illness; and those who knew it on the previous night reproached themselves bitterly with their neglect. As for M. Richard, who beheld the strange scene from his window, he was so struck with consternation, that he fell backwards upon his chair; and Madeleine, who had seen nothing, began tremblingly to take off her father's neckerchief, and put him to bed.

By the time the body was fairly deposited in the earth, with the usual ceremonies of the Catholic religion, it was high noon. Many of the villagers invited Theodore to return with them to their houses, and noticed with surprise a bundle strapped to his back like a knapsack, and the staff of a wayfarer in his hand. The young man's heart was too full to reply

in words to their kindness. He pulled off his hat, and bowed gravely and respectfully to them all; and then, turning his back to the Rock village, and his face to the Loire, he walked away, silent and in tears, and was no more seen.

SCENE II.

It was just a year and a day—the term of a knight-errant's adventures—since the death of M. de Tournoy, when, one dark, gusty, and rainy evening, a foot-traveller was seen slowly winding along the right bank of the Loire, on the road to Tours. The people of the way-side hamlets, as they shut their windows for the night, threw a glance of commiseration on the lonely and desolate-looking wanderer; and then, going into their huts, and bolting the door fast behind them, threw another piece of wood upon the hearth, and rubbed their hands in unconscious satisfaction at the contrast.

"Poor young man!" remarked the good woman of a rustic café; "if he had chosen to step in, he might have sat snugly all night by our stove, and continued his journey in the morning."

"Why did you not call him, then?" asked the husband: "the charity would have done us good."

"I wish I had. Is it too late yet? Eh, M. le voyageur! Eh, M. le piéton! Ah, he is too far!"

"Run after him, then."

"Well, it is a good thought; but, holy saints! how it rains! It would be absurd to wet one's sabots on such an errand. Charity does not demand so great a sacrifice;" and the traveller was therefore left to his fate.

By the time he came near the little valley of the

Rock, he slackened his pace, and at length stood still in the middle of the road, gazing up to the cliffs through the sharp and heavy rain that the wind dashed against his face; then looking round with a sigh, his eye rested wistfully on a small cabaret by the way-side, and he made a half-step towards it. He paused, however, irresolute, and began to search his pockets, although with the listlessness of one who knew that there was nothing in them to find.

"Not a livre!" muttered he, walking on; "not a sol! It is only a night's lodging I want; but even that I will not beg. Why should I not claim the hospitality of one of my old neighbours of the rock? Because to *her* at least I will not appear an outcast and a vagabond. To *her!* How do I know that she yet lives? There is not a light in the whole village: it looks to me like the place of death; and these fitful gusts wailing among the trees sound like the voices of spirits." He walked on till he reached the base of the rocks. Every thing was as still as the grave; the inhabitants were no doubt asleep; and the stranger, to whom nothing here was strange, began to climb the steep stair that led to the terrace.

How many recollections tugged at his heart as he went on!—how many shadows swam before his eyes! He was soon at the window of Madeleine. He bent his head and listened, while cold drops of perspiration broke upon his brow, as he thought that she was even now, perhaps, in the arms of a husband. The idea was like madness: he became alarmed at the wildness of the fancies that beset him, and rushed away from the

spot. He was half up the stair that led to the attics of the Rocks before recollecting himself.

"What do I here?" said he. "I have no father who awaits my coming!" and as he thought of the last time he had been on these steps, and of the burden he then carried, his heart softened, and leaning his head on the rock, he wept aloud.

Relieved by his tears, the youth was soon able to note, as well as the darkness permitted, the localities once so familiar. The stair appeared to have fallen into disuse; for here and there patches of green mould occupied the place where the foot was wont to tread, and wild lichens crept along the steps. This could only be accounted for by supposing that the inside communication contemplated by M. Richard had really been constructed; but Theodore's curiosity was now roused, and he sprang up the remaining distance, and in another minute stood by the window of what once had been his own dwelling. The window, being overlooked by nothing but the stars of heaven, had never been provided with shutters, and he was therefore able to see into the interior. A damp, cold air seemed to come from within; and as there was not so much as the noise of any one breathing, he concluded, in great surprise, that the apartment was uninhabited. He crept hastily round the corner of the rock to the door, and tried the latch: the door was unfastened, and he went in.

Theodore more than once passed his hands across his eyes, and pressed them on his brow, as if afraid that he was the victim of some mental delusion. The pallet

was still there, as he had left it; the bed-clothes were lying on the floor, where they had fallen when he had lifted up the corpse; his father's large, threadbare cloak still hung upon a chair; every thing was untouched: it seemed as if, instead of a year, he had not been an hour absent.

"Good God!" said he; "can it be possible that all I have suffered was but a dream? Father!"—but the cry echoing mournfully through the desolate room, convinced him that he was awake. He went in, and striking a light with the flint and steel, which a French peasant carries for the service of his pipe, he bolted the door, and threw himself on the bed to rest while he meditated.

If M. Richard had told him truly, that he wanted the additional apartment on account of his daughter's nuptials, the presumption was, that the nuptials had never taken place. But an equally natural mode of accounting for the tenement being uninhabited was, by supposing that the circumstances attending the death of his father, the neglect of the villagers, and the spectacle of the removal of the corpse, might have attached a kind of horror to the idea of the place, which indisposed any one to make it his abode; while, in M. Richard's case, his abruptness on the last morning, and his irreverent order for the removal of the dead, would no doubt contribute largely to the feeling. However this might be, the apartment, although chill and comfortless, was better than the open air on such a night; and Theodore had the means of lighting a fire when he chose, and his knapsack was tolerably well stored with provisions. The

appearance of our hero, indeed, his clothes, and his general appointments, would have seemed to indicate that he had been prosperous rather than otherwise in his adventures in the world; but the truth was, that, like other aspiring young men, he had all along bestowed great care upon externals; and when the ever-shifting tide of fortune left him alone and helpless on the strand, he retained all the trimness and tightness of a holiday voyager on the ocean of life.

A change, however, had taken place in his countenance — the year and day of his errantry had left their mark upon his brow. He was grave beyond his age, and his eye shone with that severe light which deprives even female beauty of half its allurement. He had been tried in the world, and found wanting. Too proud for his apparent station, too uneducated for a higher one, and too romantic for any, it seemed as if he alone, of all the race of mankind, had no place in society. He had sought for his father's family, some of whom were at the wars, some dead, and some as poor as himself. There was a rumour, indeed, about the proposed reinstatement of the old noblesse at the return of the Bourbon dynasty, which had just taken place; but without money, without friends, without even a precise knowledge of the real claims of his family, what hope could there be for him?

As Theodore indulged in the meditations which the place and hour inspired, and perused with a troubled eye the whole of his travel's history, an irrepressible idea of fatality arose in the midst, and flung its bleak shadow over his mind. He detected, linked in the

minutest events, the chain of his destiny, which surrounded him with folds as fatal as the serpent-coil of Laocoon. He might struggle; but it would be in vain. The table of nature was full, and he could have no part in the banquet. The stream of riches, even were he placed in the midst, would retreat from his grasp, as the waters of hell fled from the thirsty lips of the Phrygian king. He had been thrown suddenly and unwillingly upon the billows of the world, and they spurned him from their bosom. He had loved and was beloved; and in one instant, by a kind of miracle of fate, he was deceived, betrayed, and cast away. His determination, however, was now taken. He would see his lost mistress for the last time, and then enlist at Tours as a common soldier, and bury in the grave of honour his disappointment and despair.

When thus far in his reverie, his attention was arrested by the flickering of his dim light, the flame of which bent as if before the waving of a garment. The appearance might have been accounted for by a stream of air passing through some unnoticed cranny in the wall; but at this moment his mind was peculiarly open to superstitious influences, and he threw an eye almost of alarm round the chamber. The silence was intense; and by a natural association of ideas, his thoughts recurred to the circumstances of the last night he had passed in that place. He listened; and as if at his unconscious bidding, the toll of the death-bell rose once more upon the silence of night.

"It is the knell of the house of Tournoy!" said Theodore, repeating his father's words; and for some

time he sat as motionless as a statue, counting the low, measured, muffled notes of the unearthly music. In a few minutes, however, his recollection returned. He knew that it was the fashion in the world to trace such things to material causes; and he determined, before giving up his mind to the fatal influence, to make every inquiry which his situation permitted. The sound, he ascertained, was assuredly not out of doors; neither was it within the area of the apartment. If natural, therefore, it must proceed from the rock itself; — and this appeared to be the fact; for when listening with his ear to a certain part of the wall, he heard the toll more distinctly. He had always imagined that the cliff, in this part, was solid; and if so, it would be vain to search for any inhabitant more important than the toad which is sometimes seen pent up in such a dungeon, as if by the sentence of a magician. However this might be, he determined to cut as far inwards as his time and strength would permit.

This was not so difficult an operation as the reader may imagine; the soft, calcareous nature of the stone being, in fact, the cause of the singular excavations we have described, by rendering it much easier to hollow out a space in the form of a house, than it is to build one of separate blocks. Theodore accordingly set to work vigorously, with the tools which every inhabitant of the Rock village provides himself with at the commencement of his settlement, and in a short time became convinced that there was indeed a cavity, apparently of some magnitude, at little more than the distance of a foot from the surface of the wall.

As he advanced in his labour, the nature of the sound seemed to change: it became more sharp and less sonorous; and in another minute, the bell-like tone was altogether gone. Having at length reached the cavity, a great mass of stone fell inwards, and seemed to roll to a vast distance, while a noise like that of thunder shook the whole rock. Theodore paused in a panic till the roar died away in the distance; and then, impelled by fierce curiosity, looked down into the abyss, holding the light at arm's length.

The cavity formed an irregular passage, descending from right to left, and although partly natural, bore token that in some early age it had been widened by, and perhaps received its direction from, the instruments of man. The roof was encrusted with stalactites; and in one place, a single large drop of water, falling at regular intervals into a pool below, formed the simple machinery of the *death-bell.* Encouraged, and perhaps a little ashamed by this explanation, our adventurer let himself down to the bottom of the passage, which the projecting points of the rock rendered easy, and carefully shading his light from the wind that ran, although with little violence, through the cavity, began to explore.

By the time the earliest streaks of daylight appeared in the east, there was first one head, and then another, thrust cautiously out of the windows of the village. Then the door of M. Boucher, whose family was reported to be the boldest in the community, was opened; and the father came forth, followed by his son

Foulque, and seated himself on his accustomed stone. A *point d'appui* being thus formed, nearly the whole population crowded to the spot; and before there was quite light enough to enable them to see the expression of one another's faces, the inhabitants of the Rock were assembled in deep debate on the occurrences of the preceding night.

"What could it be, in the name of all the saints!" cried an ancient dame, opening the proceedings. "I have lived here, maid, wife, and widow, for the last sixty years, and never heard the like before."

"It was thunder," replied one.

"It was the groan of a legend of spirits," amended another.

"It was the voice of heaven," said a devotee, "calling us to repentance."

"But the light!" stammered M. Richard, who trembled violently—"What say you to the light?"

"The light! what light? We saw no light. If we had done so—even a single flash—we should have no difficulty in concluding that the noise was thunder."

"I will tell you," replied he. "I was awakened out of my sleep by the dreadful roar; and believing that the rock was in the act of splitting asunder, I sprang up from my bed, and ran out upon the terrace. There I saw a light—as distinctly as I now see that light in the east—gleaming in the window of the deserted dwelling of our neighbour who died a year ago, M. de Tournoy!"

The effect produced by this declaration was immense; for M. Richard was known to be a shrewd,

cool-headed, worldly man, and as such, far from being likely to be imposed upon by the tricks of the imagination. Mademoiselle Jaqueline, however, was now seen approaching the assembly; and being esteemed a quick-sighted person, and, moreover, as we have said, remarkably genteel, the eyes of all were turned towards her in their perplexity. But mademoiselle was, on this occasion, in a dishabille far from being studied; and there was something so strange in her bloodless cheeks and staring eyes, that the crowd made way for her in a kind of terror.

"We are met, ladies and gentlemen," said she, with a tremor in her voice that contrasted awkwardly with the forced dignity of her address, "to take into consideration the appearance that was seen last night on these premises."

"Then, you too witnessed it?"

"I saw him with my own eyes."

"*Him!* O, mother of God!" and the crowd—casting terrified looks into the gloom behind them—for it was yet early dawn—closed round mademoiselle with a pressure that threatened destruction to her thin wax-like figure.

"Is it possible," said she, "that this is news to you? What do you here, then, at so untimely an hour?"

"We heard a noise," cried they, "at the dead of night like the groan of a thousand giants."

"And I saw a light in the window of the deceased M. de Tournoy," added M. Richard.

"And I," said Mademoiselle Jaqueline, in a slow sepulchral tone, "beheld the dead himself! Awakened

by the noise you allude to, I could sleep no more. Restless and feverish, I lay listening in bed; and ever and anon imagining that I heard some strange sounds from the interior of my dwelling, where you are aware there is a fissure in the rock, the mouth of which I use for a cellar. I thought at one time, in fact, that I heard the curtain which conceals the aperture move; and I remembered the traditional story of a child which, having entered there, never more returned. Determining to build up the back of my cellar, however small might be the cavity, I continued to lie, wishing for day, till at length imagining that I saw some faint appearance of the dawn, I got up, and, withdrawing the curtains of my window, looked out. As I gazed towards the ridge of the rock to examine the aspect of the sky, I saw — mark me, neighbours! it was neither a waking nor a sleeping dream — I saw — as distinctly as I now see you — standing motionless on that inaccessible summit — a human figure! My eyes grew dim for a moment; but, rallied by a fierce curiosity, my courage soon returned, and I saw that it was the figure of the deceased M. de Tournoy, wrapped in his customary cloak. The shape stood without moving for several minutes, and then sunk slowly into the rock. A small lambent flame, or rather a kind of halo, hovered about the spot for an instant, and then all was dark!"

The narrative of Mademoiselle Jaqueline completed the terror of the village; for it was well known that she was an infidel in religion, as well as a revolutionist in politics. Some even remembered the fierce disdain

with which she had once treated a similar story, and the philosophical arguments she adduced against it. "I might believe," said she, on that occasion — "for perhaps there is nothing in the idea absolutely revolting to human reason — that you saw the spirit of a man; but how can a being with any pretension to rationality believe that you beheld the apparition of an old cloak, or a farthing candle?" No spectre, in fact, that ever walked could be more happy in his witnesses than the present; and the meeting at length separated, some to run for the priest, some to recite *pater nosters*, and some to build up every suspicous-looking cranny they could find in the rock.

Among the last-mentioned was Mademoiselle Jaqueline. As soon as it was fairly daylight, she lighted a candle, and proceeded to her cellar; first, however, having taken a small crucifix from a drawer, where it had lain for some years with other neglected and despised lumber, and placed it on a table within view. When she entered the cellar, and saw the dark and strange-looking hole behind, her heart almost failed her; but when, the next moment, she beheld, gleaming in the darkness, a human face, she screamed outright.

"Silence!" cried young Boucher, in a tone compounded of anger and contemptuous mirth, as he crept out of the cave. "Is this your philosophy, mademoiselle?"

"Foulque," said she, after gazing for some moments on his dark brow and sullen eye — "you force me to believe in the devil! What do you here?

"Come, come, let us talk rationally. I have seen

your ghost: he is lying at this moment asleep in old Tournoy's bed. I had a mind to have *laid* him; but as this is the day of my marriage with Madeleine, I thought it was not worth while to take the trouble."

"Good heaven! then it is young Tournoy, after all! What a fool the wisest of us will be sometimes"—and she hastily threw the crucifix again into the drawer. "But, mark me, Foulque! you *must* be married to-day, if you would marry Madeleine at all."

"*If!*"—and his sullen eye lighted up with a blaze of passion. "Have I not hunted her night and day for more than twelve months? Have I not grovelled at her feet like a beaten cur? Have I not gazed upon her, thought of her, dreamed of her, till she has become my fate? I tell thee, Madeleine shall be mine—mine"—and he clenched his hand, and ground the fingers together till the joints cracked—"mine, if I wade through hell for her!"

"That is all very well," said Mademoiselle Jaqueline; "but you must not look at *her* so. It is necessary before marriage to lie even with the features: both parties know how to indemnify themselves afterwards for the constraint. But, come, it is now time to go to M. Richard, and know our fate. What if the ceremony be deferred till to-morrow?" Foulque pointed with the smile of a demon to the cave.

"Would you really steep your hands in his blood?"

"No, no. God forbid!" said he, breaking into a chuckling laugh; "but the man who sacrilegiously insults the dead by personating a spirit should beware of the vengeance of Heaven!" His brow grew blacker as

he spoke, and his eye shone with a deadly lustre. The rain, which had ceased for a short time, had now recommenced, and falling in torrents from the dull and dreary sky, rushed in innumerable cascades down the rock. Jaqueline shuddered unconsciously as she looked at the weather and the man; but she consoled herself with the idea that, being ignorant of his meaning, she would, of course, be innocent of the deed.

Half an hour after, this worthy pair, joined by Boucher, the father, found themselves in audience at M. Richard's house.

M. Boucher stated formally that the appointed day being arrived, he came to claim the promised hand of Madeleine for his son; but the damsel's father—who had not yet recovered from his fright, and who, in fact, had a suspicion that the appearance of the spirit at this particular juncture might have some reference to the business in hand—began to demur. Such weather, he said, was not fit for Christians to marry in. Could they expect their neighbours to wade with them through a flood like this to the church? There was surely no immediate hurry; but let the ceremony be deferred at least till to-morrow, and then, rain or not, he would oppose no further obstruction to their wishes. This proposal, however, met with so much opposition from the claimants, and so many appeals were made to his sense of honour, that at last he determined to refer the matter to his daughter's decision, and Madeleine was called.

"Sir," said she, on the business being opened to her, "since both your word and mine are pledged, I

could have no possible pretext for refusing compliance; but it seems to me, when I look at that dreary sky, and listen to the torrents breaking over our heads from the swoln rain-courses on the summit of the rock, as if Providence itself had ordained that no public ceremony should take place to-day. I should feel that I committed a kind of impiety in consenting; and, since it is mine to decide, I postpone the business till to-morrow."

"Have you any *further* reason?" said Foulque, suddenly striding up to her, and fixing his fierce eyes on her face.

"Yes," she replied, drawing up haughtily—"that such is my pleasure! And you—what is *your* reason for thus hurrying the affair, in spite of God and man?"

"How cruel such a question," sighed the lover, submissively, "after a year's delay!" A sneer always mingled unconsciously with Foulque's softness; and Madeleine, as she gazed with some vague suspicion in his face, turned deadly pale. It was determined, however, that the wedding should be put off for another day, and the visitors took their leave.

"Foulque," whispered Mademoiselle Jaqueline, as they went out, "take my advice, and do nothing rashly. She is ignorant of his return; and this is no weather even for ghosts to walk."

"You are perhaps right," said he. "At all events, I shall keep watch to-night; and no spirit, whether of earth or hell, shall cross my path with impunity! Mademoiselle, a mason shall be with you in the course of the

day to build up your cellar securely: it is of more consequence than you imagine."

"Of more consequence!" thought mademoiselle, as she entered her solitary abode. "Of what consequence? Why, to prevent my being a spy, if I were so minded, on your actions. But you shall not have all things your own way. You are clever—nay, I believe you to be an incarnate devil—but you must have a few more years over your head before you are quite the master of Mademoiselle Jaqueline!"

Theodore Tournoy in the meantime continued buried in slumber in the same bed which he had occupied with his father for many years after his mother's death. When he awoke he could scarcely call to mind the circumstances of his actual situation. His dreams had been happy; he had forgotten the year and day of his pilgrimage, and imagined himself still to be in that paradise of love from which he had been driven so suddenly. When at length he had fully shaken off the sleep of the body, his waking fancies appeared to exhibit some reflection of the brightness of his visions. The village, as he had viewed it on the preceding night from the summit of the rock, was still unchanged, even by a single stone: and his heart could not believe that a moral change, so vast and so terrible as he had dreaded, could have taken place. The windows of M. Boucher's portion of the cliff were the same in number as formerly, which proved that no further excavations had been made there for the accommodation of another family; and he knew that M. Richard could

only extend his habitable domains upwards, which the discovery of the great passage — running directly above his lower premises — informed him had not been attempted. Wholly unconscious of having frightened the rock from its propriety, Theodore therefore determined to wait till nightfall, and then seek an interview with his lost mistress at her well-known window.

The rain continued all along with unabated violence; but, as the night set definitively in, our adventurer was rejoiced at the circumstance, as it seemed to preclude the possibility of his meeting with interruption. When at length the hour of midnight arrived, and the village was buried in silence, he sallied forth with a beating heart, and, gliding down the long steep stair, stood once more by the casement of Madeleine. It was with difficulty he could get his trembling fingers to knock. His thoughts were busy with their last fatal interview; and now, the heavy sky above, and the monotonous plashing of the rain below, filled his soul with a gloom, which seemed introductory to a scene as woful.

"Madeleine!" said he at last—"Madeleine!"—there was a stir in the apartment—"Madeleine!"—the window opened, and he saw the fair face of his beloved shining through the gloom.

"Theodore! O, queen of heaven!—Sir, what would you?"

"Madeleine, I can hardly answer the question. I would see you once more — I would speak to you — I would hear the voice which is the only spell to which my heart answers; and then—"

"And then! What, then? You would return to

the enchantments of the world, and forget again the village girl, till some new whim, or some unkindness of a fairer mistress, drew you back to the haunts of your childhood!"

"I can bear the mockery," said Theodore, mournfully, "since I came here with no wish to deceive you. It was my intention to confess freely that I am as poor as ever; nay, poorer, since I have now no home, and no friend in the world. It is enough; my errand is sped!"

"Theodore!" exclaimed Madeleine, with a solemn enthusiasm, "what was your errand?"

"To bid you farewell, and then to enlist as a common soldier in the army."

"I will go with you to the wars! I will break my promise — I will desert my father! I was deceived, fooled, betrayed; but I am yours. I swore it by high heaven, and all else is perjury!" and, bending out of the window, she clasped her bare arms round his neck, and burst into a passion of tears.

The explanations now exchanged by the lovers may be imagined; but when the first few moments of abandonment were over, Madeleine, with the strength and readiness of mind which are almost peculiar to woman, recalled her thoughts to the circumstances of their situation.

"The light in your window," said she, "the subterranean noise, and your appearance on the summit of the rock by the passage you discovered, all have thrown our neighbours into such consternation, that there is perhaps at this moment not an eye closed in the village.

Even now we may be watched! Return, I beg of you, to your desolate abode, and couch there without stirring till to-morrow night. The panic by that time will have died away for want of fuel; I shall get the hateful marriage postponed on pretence of illness; and by the time we meet next, my mind will be fully determined as to the step which it is necessary to take." Theodore yielded, however reluctantly; and after clasping once more his recovered treasure in his arms, bounded with a light step and a lighter heart up the stair.

When he was gone, Madeleine looked round anxiously, and then closing the casement, knelt down in such a posture that she could not herself be seen even by one looking into the window, and fixed her eye upon a dark spot in a crevice of the rock at a little distance. Her fears, after the lapse of several minutes, were confirmed. The shadow moved; and presently the figure of a man appeared stealing past the window. It was Foulque Boucher!

In one instant Madeleine had cleared the window, but as noiselessly as a cat, and stood upon the terrace.

"Skulking fiend!" said she inwardly; "my heart told me that he had the look of an assassin. But, how now? He has not followed him;—he descends the terrace;—he glides among the trees. Have with you, sir! Now he turns the rock;—now he bounds, like a hungry wolf, up the steep side of the valley;—now he stands still for a moment on the verge of the horizon;—and now he vanishes! Whither has he gone? He must be on the summit of the rock; and there—Oh God! that fatal opening discovered by Theodore—he

knows the secret — the traitor is already in the subterranean passage, and creeps like a serpent to his victim!" Madeleine's foot kept pace with her fancies. In a space of time incredibly short, she had regained the terrace, bounded up the stair, and stood like a spirit before her lover.

The house of the late M. de Tournoy was excavated, as we have said, from a cap of the rock which overhung the rest of the village; and round the base of this ran the subterranean passage. Its only openings were on the summit, in the cellar of Mademoiselle Jaqueline, and below at the corner of the valley. The two last, however, were exceedingly narrow; and perhaps it was owing to the occasional flooding of the passage by the overflow of the rain-courses, that the foundations of this upper rock were, in a manner, eaten away; thus rendering the entire structure to all appearance insecure. The house of Mademoiselle Jaqueline was at some distance to the left, supposing the spectator to stand facing the cliff; and being excavated in a bold promontory of rock, it commanded a view of all the other habitations, and particularly of that of Tournoy, with which it was nearly on a level. Like a few of the other houses, we may add, it was not absolutely a cavity made in the solid stone; the inequalities of the rock making a cover of thatch requisite on about a third part of the roof. This description is necessary in order to render the scene that followed intelligible; although perhaps the pen should not attempt at all what would seem to be the peculiar province of the pencil.

Madeleine had not been a considerable number of

minutes in the apartment of her lover, when the villagers, who had by this time fallen into a troubled sleep, scared simultaneously as if by some terrible dream, started suddenly up in their beds. A sound more awful and more vast than that of the preceding night fell wildly and wailingly upon their ear. It was like the sweep of waters! The rock itself groaned and trembled at the potent voice; and the human beings who heard it imagined, in spite of the Almighty promise, that a new day of wrath was come, and that the windows of heaven were again opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up.

In the dwelling of Mademoiselle Jaqueline, more especially, there were confusion and dismay. This woman, whose heart was oppressed by a vague sense of guilty knowledge, had not retired to bed, but sat up all night, watching for some sound which might indicate the purpose of Foulque. As the time crept on, however, towards the dead hour, curiosity, and even self-interest, gave way to terror. She was astonished at her day-light daring, in determining to use the subterranean passage in order to be a spy upon the actions of her associate, and bitterly regretted having prevented the mason from building up the cavity. She remembered the man's singular anxiety to perform his office, and the lie with which she was obliged to satisfy him, that the order had been countermanded by Foulque himself; and at length, in a sudden panic, which was not the less acute for being without any definite object, she ran to the cellar, and filled up the hole with such substitutes for solid masonry as her ingenuity could think of.

But when that dreadful sound rose upon the night, at which the earth itself seemed to shudder, every faculty was paralysed by terror. A vague, dull, heavy consciousness of danger hung like a thunder-cloud upon her mind. A confused thought passed across her brain, as if in one instant, of Foulque, Theodore, Madeleine—of water and fire—of the contemned saints and a rejected Saviour—of heaven, purgatory, and hell. She was roused from her dream by Foulque himself, who rushed into the apartment.

"Woman," said he, "has the mason done his duty?"

"Yes," was the ready lie. She looked in his face as she uttered it, and shrunk back aghast. The skin was as sallow and wax-like as that of a corpse, the teeth were clenched, the nostrils dilated, and the long black hair hung back from his forehead in damp flakes. He looked like a demon.

In another moment he tore down the curtains, and dragged his affrighted associate to the window.

"Look there!" he cried, in a discordant shriek, while his throat rattled and his breast heaved convulsively with a kind of chuckle, although no sound of laughter came from his lips. A light was in Tournoy's window, in the upper rock. This was all she could see at first; for her heart died within her at the subterranean roar, which became louder and wilder every instant. Soon, however, the rock appeared to tremble; then a fragment was detached, followed by a burst of water; and then the enormous mass, elevated, as it were, on the shoulders of the village, was rent in twain.

One half fell headlong down with a groan like thunder, and bounding in an unwieldy leap over the ledges of the lower cliff, broke in fragments upon the trees at the bottom.

The other half did not yet follow. One of the walls of Tournoy's apartment had been torn away; and the fire was seen burning brightly on the hearth, and Theodore standing before it—with his mistress locked in his arms.

At this unexpected sight, disclosing the triumph of his rival even in death, and the loss of her for whom he had thrown away his hope of heaven, Foulque uttered a howl of despair.

"Mercy! mercy!" screamed Jaqueline at the same moment. The floor of the apartment was covered with water, which in an instant bubbled and boiled up to their knees, and the rending of the passage in the cellar by the impetuous torrent was distinctly heard.

"Liar!" cried Foulque, in mingled rage and terror, as he smote her a furious blow upon the face. She sunk senseless at his feet, and was swallowed up by the flood. He sprang upon the window-table. A single glance convinced him that, owing to the incessant fall of stones and torrents, there was no chance of safety without; and, tearing with Herculean force an opening in the thatch, he got out upon the roof. In the action, the candle was overturned, and the thin curtains caught fire, communicating with the damp straw; and thus, in the midst of water, smoke, and flame, did the despairing villain emerge into the open air.

The windows of the village were crowded with pale

faces, attracted by the blaze; and Theodore and Madeleine looked down upon the new phenomenon—and in safety—for the waters, having at length found a vent (the other end of the subterranean passage having been purposely built up), directed their whole fury towards the spot.

The roof gave way; and Foulque clung gasping to the rock. The rock split asunder; and fragment after fragment rushed roaring down the steep. The fire was now extinguished; and a cloud of smoke hung heavily over the scene, and hid the event from the horrified eyes of the spectators. When the veil was slowly withdrawn, no vestige of Jaqueline's house could be discovered, nor of the human beings it had contained; and the last wave of the torrent was seen plunging tranquilly down the path it had cleared for its reception.

The miserable being, who was thus overwhelmed in the destruction he had prepared for another, conferred unwittingly a signal favour upon the community, partly by depriving it of two of its most worthless members, and partly by overthrowing, without the loss of valuable life, that portion of the rock which must speedily have fallen—perhaps at a worse time—since so little exertion of his could open the subterranean passage for the reception of the rain-courses of the hills. The remaining portion, containing the dwelling of M. Tournoy, was removed soon afterwards, at the expense of government, by means of gunpowder.

Theodore, independently of the hand of Madeleine, had something in store for him worth living for. His inquiries after his family, of which he was now the

representative, came at length to the ear of one of his relations, a rich old banker, whose influence at court was very great; and perhaps, in these days of revolution, it will be more gratifying than startling to the reader to be told, that at this moment the Count de Tournoy, and his yet lovely lady, rank among the brightest ornaments of the circles of the French noblesse.*

* "I saw a large mass of this rock," says M. de Villiers, "that had fallen down in a single night, which was an eternal night for more than one family; and I saw rebuilt, or rather redug, a new habitation close by, in a place that did not appear to be more solid. These fatal accidents, occasioned by the fissures or crevices sometimes formed in the rock, are fortunately very rare."—*Itinéraire.*

CHAPTER IV.

ANJOU.

Touraine makes high pretensions to antiquity. According to some authors, an army of Tourangeaux set out to take the part of the defenders in the Trojan war; but finding Ulysses and Pyrrhus triumphant, they returned home, carrying with them the fugitives who escaped by the light of the funeral flames of their city. In times that are more within the ken of history, the Turones were an important people of Celtic Gaul, distinguished by their courage and love of liberty. Cæsar informs us, that in the league formed by Vercingetorix, the contingent furnished by them was not inferior to that of the most powerful of their neighbours; and in the revolt of the sixty-four Gaulic towns against the Romans, in the year of our era 21, they were the first to take up arms, and the last to lay them down. Engaged in perpetual war, yet never actually receiving a foreign yoke, this people of agitators were dreaded by every body.

"Instabiles Turones circumsita castra coërcent,"

says Lucan. In 435, they made a new attempt, which was unsuccessful, notwithstanding sixteen years of battle: thirty years after, they were in part subdued by the

Visigoths; and towards the year 507, Alaric being slain at the famous fight of Vouillé, the Turones were incorporated with the Franks, and their country constituted a portion of what was speedily to be termed the French empire.

In the twelfth century, Louis VII. returning from the Holy Land, found his domestic affairs in some confusion; and being a man of nice honour, (although he once made a holocaust of thirteen hundred persons in a church), divorced his wife on the instant. The lady married Henry Plantagenet, who was already possessed of Anjou and Normandy, and brought him as her portion about a third part of France, including Touraine. Thus a conjugal quarrel, which in our day creates only a few *rows* in the street, turned topsy-turvy the geography of two powerful kingdoms.

Philip II., surnamed Augustus, was of a different mould from his father Louis. He made war on every body, turned the Jews out of his kingdom, laughed at the Pope, and went to fight the Saracens. After his return, finding that John Lackland had committed the *faux pas* of murdering his young competitor Arthur, he tried him as his feudal vassal, and confiscated his French estates. This would have been only a joke, had Philip not been strong enough to turn it into earnest; but the judge took care to see the sentence carried into execution by means of an army: and thus Touraine and other provinces, forming one half of France, returned to the French monarchy. Mary Stuart, the unfortunate Queen of Scots, when she became the widow of Francis II., received the title of Duchess of

Touraine; but this was only an empty sound, as the province had already been given away in apanage.

Tours, the capital city of the province, was formerly called Cæsarodunum, and afterwards Urbs-Turones. It was, according to Gregory of Tours, the first privileged town in France—a distinction which it owed to the veneration inspired by the tomb of Saint Martin. It was also the first town which sent deputies to Henri III. after the famous day of the barricades; and, in consequence of this act of loyalty, that prince transferred to Tours, in 1589, his parliament and the other superior courts of Paris. The population, at one time upwards of sixty thousand, is now little more than twenty-three thousand. In 1828, the number of resident English, attracted by considerations of climate and economy, was fifteen hundred. We had no time to inquire into the condition of our countrymen; but they appeared to us to belong to the better class of English absentees, and to lounge about the streets with somewhat less of the bitterness, or regret, which distinguishes an expatriated John Bull.

It was comparatively an easy matter to get into Tours: the difficulty was, to get out of it. In almost all the provincial towns of France, the ignorance and stupidity of the police and other functionaries are very remarkable. Most of them appear even to write with difficulty; and if a question arises requiring the slightest exertion of their own judgment or common sense, they are all at sea. At Tours they refused, for a long time, to *viser* our passport for Nantes, because it was not the original English document, although it bore

distinctly the declaration of the prefect of police, that "it was to stand in the place of the English one, which had not arrived from Calais." This, however, was the objection of the sous-chefs, and was overruled by the mayor; but he, on his part, was anxious to know what possible business we could have in the seat of rebellion. It was in vain to say that the authorities at Paris would have *viséd* the passport at once for Nantes, if we had desired it: he, the mayor, "did not know us—we were a stranger in the country, and journeying without apparent object to the centre of disaffection."

In this difficulty the Arts came to our relief. We had fortunately in our possession a few of the beautiful engravings of this volume, and a copy of the "Picturesque Annual" for last year. The mayor's heart opened as he gazed.

"Aha!" said he; "that is another thing. They are superb! You English are a very strange people—a very extraordinary people! But come, since I perceive that you are *only a Valter Scott*, why you must go where you please!"

Being thus permitted to go where we pleased, it was our pleasure to go westward; and leaving behind us the faubourg Saint-Symphorien, on the right bank of the river, we pursued our way along the levée towards Saumur. The road runs close by the side of the river, and is flanked on the right hand by a line of calcareous cliffs like those above Tours, but not so much excavated. A series of vineyards, gardens, and summer-houses continues for more than a league, till we reach the village of La Vallière; but previously, we

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Engraved by R. Brandard

had crossed the river Choisille over the bridge of La Motte, between the two hamlets of the Maisons Blanches and La Guignière. Near the bridge, a road conducts to the village of Foudettes, about a league from the Loire, where are to be seen the remains of a Roman aqueduct, called, strangely enough, by the natives, the Arena.

Three leagues from Tours is the little town of Luynes, supposed by some, with little probability, to be the real Cæsarodunum, the ancient capital of the Turones. The aqueduct above mentioned, however, there is no doubt, conducted to it; and other remains of Roman antiquities, within the town itself, attest its ancient importance. At present, the most remarkable object it boasts is the Château de Chatigné, formerly called the Château de Maillé, which stands upon a height before you enter, overlooking the windings of the river. The round pointed towers of this building, with the general elegance of its Gothic architecture, produce a very delightful effect in so conspicuous a situation, although this is in some measure interrupted by the oddity of the stones of the edifice being in different colours, white and red, and disposed in checquered work.

On the opposite bank the perspective is magnificent, leading the eye through seemingly interminable woods, and relieving it by fitful glimpses of the river as it winds in the distance. The road itself runs through a continued orchard of fruit-trees, heavy with cherries, apples, pears, and walnuts.

On the way to Langeais, a very remarkable monu-

ment presents itself, called the Pile Cinq Mars. This is a quadrangular brick tower, or pillar, eighty-four feet high, and each of its sides sixteen feet broad. It is surmounted by four small columns, (a fifth, in the middle, having been blown down,) supposed to be about seven feet in height. The strange thing is, that no human being knows any thing about the origin or purpose of so singular a structure. Some suppose it to be Celtic, some Gothic, some Roman; and one writer, M. Joanneau, determining its age at two thousand four hundred years, imagines that he can read in the disposition of the parts of the structure the whole astronomical system of the Celts. The twelve square compartments on the southern front are, according to him, the twelve houses of the sun; and the twenty-eight cut stones forming the cornice of the four fronts are the twenty-eight houses of the moon. The pile itself he imagines to have been an observatory; but on this point it is urged against him, with more than plausibility, that there neither is, nor was, a staircase, outside or in, for the astronomer to ascend, and that a ladder of eighty-four feet would have been rather a difficult and dangerous avenue to science. The most common opinion, originated, we believe, by M. Millin, is, that the building, whatever people were the architects, is a sepulchral monument, and that the five pillars on the summit denote its having been raised in honour of five persons. It is supposed that the mystery might be solved by subterranean researches; but, solid and massive as the monument is, this could scarcely be attempted without danger to the whole structure.

The village of Cinq Mars is particularly neat, and, with the ruins of its castle, consisting of two round towers and a rampart tower, forms an agreeable object in the picture. The valley of the Loire is here so wide, that one would think the Cher had not only added its stream, but its valley, to those of its greater neighbour. The two rivers, in fact, occupy but one valley, running almost parallel with each other for six leagues.

Langeais, anciently Angestum, or Alingavin, three leagues from Luynes, is a little town, with one street and an old castle. The castle was founded in the eleventh century by Foulques Nera, Count of Anjou, and reconstructed in the thirteenth by Pierre de Bronc, minister and favourite of Philip the Bold, who was hung for poisoning his master's son, and accusing the queen of the crime. In this château Charles VIII. was married to Anne of Brittany, and the realm of Brittany, so often unfaithful, reunited in holy wedlock to that of France. The hall of the espousals is now a stable. The château, as it stands to-day, is, in the outside, almost entire, and is a very handsome but somewhat precise building, surrounded by mean houses, and forming the corner of the single street of Langeais.

The next relay is three leagues distant, at the Trois Volets, a hamlet by the side of the levée, and only separated by it from the Loire; and three leagues farther is the more considerable bourg of Chouzé, set down in a perfect magazine of fruit and vegetables, grain and wine. Two leagues to the north of the latter place are the vineyards of Saint Nicolas de Bourgueil, which produce a red wine celebrated for its rich colour and

stomachic qualities. Bourgueil itself, the chef lieu of the canton, is a little town of twenty-five hundred inhabitants, distinguished by the ruins of its ancient abbey of Benedictines, founded by Fier-à-bras, in the year 990.

On leaving Chouzé, we met with an instance of the self-importance of the peasant-soldiers who form here the national guard. Our vehicle was in the middle of the road when two of these personages were passing along the footway, carrying to the head-quarters of the canton a miserable-looking Chouan, tied with ropes to their wrists. We were about to pass without further notice than the stare of curiosity, when, to our amazement, we saw the two heroes rush from the footway, dragging the Chouan, like a half-strangled cur, after them, plant themselves manfully in front, and make a lounge at our horses with their bayonets! Our offence, we found, was having presumed to look at so interesting a spectacle without stopping—or rather, without following the example of the Levite, and passing by on the other side.

A league beyond Chouzé, we leave the ancient Touraine, and pass into the ancient Anjou, now the department of the Maine-et-Loire. On the opposite side of the river, although not in sight, is the ci-devant abbey of Fonterrault, founded by Robert d'Arbrissel, in the year 1099. If this man had been canonised, he would have been worshipped by the women of all Christendom. He overturned the salic law of convents, and brought his monks under the wholesome government of abbesses; and wisely believing that the

fair sex must improve the other, under any and every circumstance, he shut up nuns and monks in the same cloister. There is an article on this subject in Bayle, containing, as usual, some good sense, much solemn sneering, and abundance of useless erudition. The abbey remained till the revolution; but even now its ruins are a sort of cloister, in which both sexes are confined. The difference is, that in former times the oaths were taken *by* the devotees, while now they are taken *against* them; and that, instead of being shut up, as before, from doing good, the more happy moderns are shut up from doing evil. The convent is a central prison for eleven departments, and is capable of accommodating fifteen hundred prisoners. Among the curiosities presented by this ancient building are the tombs of the kings and queens of England who were earls and countesses of Anjou. There are only four, however, remaining; those of Henry II., of Eléonore of Guienne, of the son of Cœur-de-Lion, and of Elizabeth, the queen of John Lackland.

Farther on, on the same side of the river, is the village of Dampierre, where Marguerite of Anjou, Queen of England, died and was buried. On the right bank, in rumbling through the village of Villebernier, we already catch a glimpse of the château of Saumur, on its majestic rock; and soon after, having completed four leagues and a half from Chouzé, reach the faubourg of Croix Verte.

On attempting to pass the bridge which crosses an arm of the Loire, some peasant-soldiers rushed out of the guard-house upon us with charged bayonets, and

apparently in great alarm. We were amused to find afterwards, that there are several other entrances to the town, not guarded at all!

Saumur is situated in an angle formed by the junction of the Loire and the Thouet. The former river is crossed by two bridges, rendered necessary by the intervention of an island, and the latter by a smaller bridge of three arches. These are traversed, in a straight line, by the royal route from Bordeaux to Rouen; and thus the town may be said to be in the centre of a great thoroughfare, both by land and water. From the Pont Neuf, the largest bridge, the town, as the traveller enters it, presents quite a magnificent aspect. In front, there is a wide street well provided with hotels; and on the left hand a handsome theatre, with a public promenade beyond, and the dome of Notre-Dame-des-Ardilliers terminating the view. This, however, is only the *ground-plan* of the place; for, rising still to the left, on a colossal rock which dominates the whole town, are the towers of the château; and beyond these, in continual action, are many of those redoubtable giants which had the glory of overthrowing Don Quixote.

The château has a bare and threatening appearance. There is not a tree in its neighbourhood; and, from its great elevation, there are no other objects near to form a picture. The view from the heights is one of the richest and most extensive we ever saw. The country lies spread before you as in a map, and appears to be a single garden—like that garden "planted eastward in Eden," with four rivers to water it, the Loire, the Thouet, the Vienne, and the Authion. There is nothing

more remarkable in the interior of the château than a hundred thousand muskets which it is said to contain; for it is now a military arsenal, having formerly been a royal fortress, and then a state-prison.

At the opposite side of the town is the Place d'Armes, an extensive area, one side of which is formed by the School of Cavalry, and the other by the stables, still unfinished. The school, in which are included the barracks, resembles a royal palace, and is one of the most magnificent buildings of the kind in France. Lieutenants are drafted to this academy of war from regiments of the line, and after acting for a stated time as professors, go out with the rank of captains. The subalterns, in like manner, rise to the rank of lieutenants, and are drafted into various regiments; while the pupils, or common recruits, become in their turn subalterns. There were two hundred officers there during our visit, and the scene presented by the Place d'Armes was very animated. The French attitude in riding, however, is more odd than graceful to the eyes of an Englishman. The horseman, instead of using the stirrups, as with us, and keeping a perpendicular seat, leans backwards, clinging with his legs to the saddle, and submitting patiently to the motion of the animal.

We found some good horses in the stables of the school, and in particular a very beautiful creature called the Lutzen. He is an English horse, full of fire and malice; but we fancy that his place must be nearly a sinecure, having been told, in proof of his vast superiority over the whole stud, that he could leap

the paling in front of the stables — a height considerably less than that of a five-bar-gate.

At a short walk beyond the Place d'Armes, in the same direction, we crossed the little river Thouet by means of a ferry-boat, and reached an immense building, apparently of modern construction, although in ruins. This is the abbey of Saint Florent, which was destroyed during the revolution, and afterwards repaired and converted into a senatorie under Napoleon. Although now abandoned, the interior is in good preservation: the staircase is very beautiful, and some of the apartments might well lodge a monarch. Saint Florent is a small straggling village on the heights; but the walks in the neighbourhood are beautiful and romantic in no ordinary degree.

The citizens of Saumur, disgusted by the assumptions of the convents of Saint Florent and Fontevrault, threw themselves into the arms of the Calvinists at an early period of the reform; and this town was frequently the head-quarters of the party. Its prosperity at length received a fatal blow by the revocation of the edict of Nantes; and Louis XIV. was able to inscribe on the cupola of Notre-Dame-des-Ardilliers, "Ludovicus XIV. Franc. et Navar. rex, toto regno hæresim destruxit, ejusque fautores terrâ marique profligavit."

From Saumur to the bourg of Rosiers, the distance is four leagues, through a rich country of corn, fruit, and wine, dotted with hamlets and villages, and rendered interesting by some remains of Roman antiquities. The small town of Gennes, on the left bank,

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R.A.

Engraved by R. Brandard

opposite Rosiers, forms one of the most beautiful pictures in the whole course of the Loire. Nearly the same kind of scenery continues for five leagues, till we get beyond the pretty village of Daguénière, where a pyramid indicates the spot on which the levée terminates, after its course of forty leagues. At Daguénière, the road forsakes the river, and proceeds, for two leagues and a half, in a straight line to Angers.

Before arriving at the faubourg of Angers, a building of rather a singular appearance is observed on the right. It is an octagon tower of considerable height, with numerous windows, and appears to the traveller to have been intended either for an observatory or a watch-tower. It was intended for both; but with a holier purpose than to observe the stars or watch the enemy. A young woman was torn from the arms of her father, not by violence, but by love. She was married, and conveyed to her new dwelling at some distance. The old man, although he did not oppose the separation, felt it bitterly; and, as the only consolation he could think of, built this tower, that he might at least *see* from the summit the abode of his beloved daughter.

The capital of Anjou, let travellers say what they will, is nothing more than a dark, dirty, dismal town, with fine public walks, a magnificent cathedral, and a château that looks as if it had been built by giants.

The cathedral, dedicated to Saint Maurice, is in the form of a Latin cross. The lofty roof is unsupported by pillars, and the nave unbroken by chapels, which gives a character of vastness to the interior scarcely

deserved by its true dimensions. Instead of the chapels which in most of the continental churches appear to form part of the nave, from which they are only separated by rails, there are two small doorways, one on each side of the church, which lead into distinct apartments containing several altars. In one of these we remarked an idol, representing the favourite deity of the Catholics, inscribed, " Matre Christi, die ac nocte protege nos ! " and at another altar, in the same apartment, dominated by a silver statue of this goddess, called the " Mother of Mercy," there was a crowd of worshippers on their knees ; while one close by, adorned with the representation of " Him crucified," was wholly neglected.

Advancing into the church, the two arms of the cross appear terminated by handsome altars, and the master-altar in front forms a very splendid piece of religious architecture, of marble and gilding. The gilded roof or baldaquin of this last is supported by six pillars of richly variegated marble of Saint Bertavin, of an exquisite polish. The effect of the whole is exceedingly fine ; and not the less so, perhaps, that there are few pictures or other ornaments to distract the attention.

The ancient château of the Dukes of Anjou, at once their habitation and their citadel, is one of the most vast and massive piles of architecture we ever saw. The walls, of immense height, are flanked by eighteen round towers of colossal dimensions, which still give a formidable and imposing air to the edifice. A deep ditch surrounds the whole, which is only crossed on

one spot by a drawbridge ; and this being rarely raised, a narrow footway of planks conducts to a small postern beside the gate. The buildings within the walls, consisting in front of a handsome chapel, are comparatively slight in appearance; but, as they are at present the depôt of powder and the prison of the town, the jealousy of the authorities, at this particular juncture, prevented our inspecting them.

This being fair time, we had an opportunity of observing the people of the entire district; and we can say with confidence, that a manifest improvement has taken place in female beauty since we last noticed it. The change, however, has not occurred suddenly. At Tours it was first perceptible; at Saumur strikingly evident; and here, in the capital of Anjou, we reckon the women to be among the prettiest in France.

The history of Anjou, under the dynasty of the sovereign counts, is neither interesting nor well-authenticated; and, perhaps, till the confiscation of the French estates of John Lackland by Philip Augustus, it is hardly worth much attention. At that time it was reunited to the crown, and then passed, in appanage, to the children of the king. Saint Louis bestowed it upon his brother Charles; and this new house of Anjou ended under Philip le Bel, who erected the county into a duchy in the year 1297. In this form it was handed down to the sons or brothers of France till the time of Louis VI., shortly after which it was permanently united to the crown.

This, however, is but the far and shadowy outline, which in reality embraces as much of the noble, the

strange, and the extravagant in character and incident as any romance that was ever imagined. Ingelger, the first count, was a true hero, and in the midst of his barbarous age appears shining like a torch in the night. He was adopted by the Countess de Gâtinois, who had no children; and, passing through the usual stages of chivalry, as page and esquire, was at length sent forth, girded with the sword of a knight, against the northern robbers, who at that time ravaged the coasts and rivers of France.

Ingelger paid handsomely for his new spurs, and in due time returned from the wars covered with glory. He rushed, with a swelling heart, into the presence of his benefactress, and threw himself at her feet; but she was in tears. All was in confusion. Slanders had gone forth against her fame, and the once high and haughty Countess of Gâtinois was now an injured and dishonoured woman. The young knight looked round in wrath and amazement for the insulter; and being accepted as her champion by her who had vouchsafed protection to his early years, he defied him to mortal combat, and encountered and slew him in closed lists. For this service he was made the legatee of her domains; and afterwards, by success both in love and war, became one of the most powerful lords of his time, and the founder of the dynasty of the counts of Anjou

It was Foulques II., a grandson of Ingelger, who used the expression so often quoted—"An unlettered king is a crowned ass." It was remarked of his son, Geoffroi I., that he styled himself Count of Anjou, "by the grace of God, and the favour of Gesberge, his

mother," which is looked upon by some writers as a mark of filial piety, and by others as an acknowledgment that he did not possess his estates by hereditary right. The son of this count was the celebrated Foulques Nerra, a great saint, a great sinner, and one of the most extraordinary men of his age. After returning from the second crusade, his uneasy conscience, no less than his passion for adventures, led him a third time to Syria; and in Jerusalem the strange spectacle was presented to the inhabitants of this sovereign prince dragged on a hurdle through the streets, with a rope round his neck, and scourged lustily by two of his domestics, while he shrieked incessantly, "Lord, have mercy on the perjured traitor Foulques!"

He was succeeded by Geoffroi Martel, who, after a life of tyranny and excess, retired to a convent, leaving his estates to his two nephews, who fought bitterly for the legacy. One of them, Foulques-le-Réchin, was the husband of the celebrated Bertrade, who, having an amour with Philip I. of France, ran off to Paris to her lover, and there became his queen. Some time afterwards, according to Menage, the royal pair were at Angers, where Bertrade contrived to effect a reconciliation between her two husbands, treating them to a splendid feast, and serving them herself at table. On this and other occasions, the new Menelaus was so completely overcome, that he was seen at the feet of his faithless wife; and King Philip, on his part, was in like manner the submissive slave of her talents. Bertrade was at last converted by Robert d'Arbrissel, and retired to the abbey of Fontevrault already mentioned,

where the rigour of the monastic discipline speedily terminated her life.

Foulques V., unlike his father, was a lofty and romantic character. He bestowed his daughter Matilda on Etheling, son to Henry I. of England; but the bridegroom was drowned immediately after the festival, and the youthful widow retired to Fontevrault, and became the bride of heaven. Foulques then gave his son and heir Geoffroi to an English princess, which eventually carried the house of Anjou to the throne of England; and abandoning in their favour his European territories, set out for the East, and was elected King of Jerusalem. At the death of Henry I., however, Geoffroi was set aside by the English barons in favour of Stephen; but after Stephen's death, his son Henry, surnamed, like his father, Plantagenet, mounted the throne. It was to this prince that the divorced Eleonore gave her hand and her immense dowry, which made him possessor of one half of France. Richard Cœur-de-Lion succeeded, whose history is too well-known even for an outline; and then John Lackland, from whose grasp the rich continental inheritance was torn, and thus became the origin of the interminable wars of France and England.

Any thing more of history would be impertinent in a work like the present; but there are some of our readers—and those the fairest—who may have forgotten the source of the connexion between the two countries, and who may not be displeased to have it recalled so briefly to their memory.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNKNOWN.

A FEW leagues to the north of Angers the Loir and the Sarthe, on their way to the Loire, join forces; and before entering the town are met by the Mayenne. The three rivers, then assuming the name of the Maine, run through Angers, and plunge in one stream into the waters of the great monopolist.

We left the ancient capital of Anjou by no means unwillingly; for it was hardly possible to breathe in it for the dust, which swept in whirlwinds through the narrow streets, and promised faithfully abundance of mud for wet weather. The Maine at first appeared to be a very uninteresting river; the banks consisting of a plain on either side, little elevated above the water. Soon, however, it makes a more romantic bend; and the old convent of Beaumette appears, rising on a ridge of rocks, which, with some assistance from human art, wall it round like a fortress. This was the beloved retreat of King René, whose memory is yet dear to the Angevines. He was an amiable but unfortunate man, with a feeble mind, and an excellent heart. He never formed a wish that was gratified, nor a project that did not fail. Titular Prince of Jerusalem, Naples, Sicily,

Majorca, Lorraine, Bar, Anjou, and Provence — the last was all that remained to him for his death-bed.

The rocks soften down on the right, and the village of Bouchemain appears — a collection of poor and small, yet snug houses, with a little tapering spire in the midst; and soon after the hamlets of the Pointe announce that we have gained the confluence of the two rivers, and that we are once more to wander on the bosom, or on the banks of the majestic Loire.

The bourg of Savenières on the right bank is worth a visit, on account of the ruins in its neighbourhood of the château of La Roche-au-Moine, which was built by the orders of Philip Augustus for the purpose of disputing the Loire with the château of Rochfort, on the opposite bank, in the hands of John Lackland. We now reach the island of Behuard, celebrated in the chronicles for its sanctity. It is said, that at the introduction of Christianity into these countries there was here a temple of Belus, which was destroyed by Saint Maurille, who raised an altar to the virgin on the spot. The site of the church of Nôtre Dame, however, resembles more one of the favourite haunts of Druidical superstition. An immense schistous rock elevates its brow in the middle of the island, surrounded by woods and groves; and on this rock, at least thirty feet high, the church is built, the sharp point of the cliff rising nearly two yards, in the interior, above the pavement. In the twelfth century this shrine of the virgin enjoyed a high reputation; nor was the goddess slow in making a proper return by means of signs and miracles. The trouble of these manifestations no doubt fell to the

share of the monks of Saint Nicholas; but the holy fathers, it is to be hoped, rendered themselves justice by deducting a proper commission from the offerings of the pilgrims.

Rochfort is on the left, upon a height near a great plain chiefly of sand, where there appears an object which the traveller hardly knows what to make of at a distance. Let him by all means yield to the temptation which he feels to disembark ; for a scene more striking in itself, and more interesting in its associations, can hardly be met with. There is an aspect of sterility and desolation about the plain, which, occurring in the very midst of the verdant fields and sunny slopes of the Loire, impresses the mind with a kind of awe. All is silence and solitude; and the very wind, as it sweeps over the desert, has something at once mournful and sullen in its sound.

In the middle of the plain there is an enormous rock, or rather a congregation of rocks, which would seem to have been placed there, like the mounds of stones we meet with in Spain, in memory of some fearful crime. Here, however, the monument must have been raised by giants, and the deed it covered or commemorated such as would make the Loire of to-day run blood. If you look towards it with your half-shut eyes, your fancy shapes out of the jagged rocks, notwithstanding the wilderness around, the turrets, domes, towers, and roofs of a city. And this is not a dream, but a memory; for there stood Diexai, founded by pirates, continued in victory, and ruined by fire and sword. Its two châteaux were formerly separated by

a river that ran between, beneath which there was a subterranean passage communicating from one to the other. These were occupied by John Lackland, and the place utterly destroyed by the English in the fifteenth century.

Gliding down the river, we pass the Ile Neuve, the hamlet of Saint René, and the village of La Poissonière, situated amidst vineyards and orchards, and arrive at Chalonnes. This place is said to be of earlier date than the fourth century, and is still inhabited by *unbelievers*. The origin of the soubriquet is described by M. Bodin as follows: —

"Near the clock of Saint Maurille," says the learned inquirer into the antiquities of Anjou, "there is a little tower in the form of a pulpit; and from this tower the Gospel was announced by the monks to the heathen inhabitants of Chalonnes. So long as the orators confined themselves to Christian morality, and the dogmas of the faith, the audience listened with great docility; but the moment a word was said about *tithes* they all dispersed. This continued so often, that at last the preachers, wearied of throwing away their eloquence, admitted the Chalonnais into the body of the church, exempting them for ever from the payment of ecclesiastical tribute, but stamping them, by way of a punishment, with the name of *unbelievers*."

Following the course of the Loire, Montjan, on the left bank, is the next place worthy of observation; but of this the beautiful view annexed will convey a better idea than any description of ours. The object, however, is still more remarkable in nature than in the engraving,

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R.A.

Engraved by J. T. Willmore.

since it rises in that imposing manner from a dead level. There is also a fishing hamlet at the base concealed by the trees, which, contrasting with the magnificent ruins above, adds to their effect. The Marshal René of Montjan, who died in the sixteenth century, and whose tomb was seen in the fine sepulchral chapel till the revolution, when the whole building was destroyed by fire, was the last of his name. He was so proud a man, that while in the office of viceroy in Piemont, as Brantome tells us, he conducted his business by means of ambassadors, wishing to counterfeit the state of a king — "a thing which Francis I. found very foolish."

From Montjan we crossed the Loire for the purpose of visiting Chantocé, the village spire of which is all that is visible from the river. The village itself is a group of small neat houses flanking the high way, and remarkable, notwithstanding their situation in a great thoroughfare, for an air of simplicity and seclusion. Near the houses there is a small lake, whose smooth bosom, reflecting the heights and trees that surround it, adds greatly to the idea of tranquillity; and above, overlooking the whole, are the ruins of an old castle, which fling *upon*, and *over* that tranquillity — if we can make ourselves understood—the shadow of their solemn and antique grandeur.

The château of the Sires de Laval, the lords of Retz, is still formidable in its ruins. The tower, cleft in twain from the summit to the base, seems to forbid threateningly the approach of the traveller; and through the crumbling walls that surround the building he sees its desolate courts overgrown with weeds—in the midst of

which stands a solitary cow, like the image of meditation — and its roofless chambers resounding only to the hoot of the owl, and the wings of the hermit bat. Near the wall, half choked with docks and nettles, there are several wide black mouths gaping from the earth, into which the wanderer looks with a shudder, as a thousand stories of subterranean horrors connected with the times of feudality crowd upon his memory. In these gulfs the peasant even of our own day, who is hardy enough to venture in search of the treasures supposed to lie hidden in their recesses, finds only bones of women and children, broken fetters, and instruments of torture and death.

But it is with the village our business lies at present; and we shall defer till another opportunity giving an account of the veritable Blue-Beard, that incarnation of juvenile romance, whose history we do believe we could not read, even at this noon of manhood, without tears and trembling. The tale we have now to tell will serve for a contrast, if for nothing else; but, lest the reader should be inclined to treat with too much disdain our humble personages and small events, it may be well to advertise him that the principal circumstances of the narrative are recorded in history.

THE UNKNOWN.

One evening, when the twilight was fast deepening into darkness, a certain individual, travelling alone, and on foot, drew near to the hamlet of Chantocé. His

pace was slow, yet he did not appear much fatigued; and, although the night was coming sullenly down, he seemed to care little about his lodgings. The aspect of the place, however, as he advanced, seemed to strike him either with admiration or curiosity, or simply by its air of originality; and, at length, he stood still, and gazed for some minutes upon the ruins of the castle, which dominated the scene with a majesty so mournful as might have tempted one to pull off his hat who would have stood covered in the presence of a reigning king.

"Good, good," said the traveller, who seemed accustomed to express his thoughts in words; "a marvellously good position, and commanding, doubtless, the plain of the Loire on the other side. The great Frederick could not have desired a better! Suppose the bivouac were here, and the enemy encamped on the other side of the main road—bah! what matters the calculation? It is to talk as if one were only a general or a king!" Nevertheless, he wandered from the track of the road, and pressed up the sides of the steep, the summit of which was crowned by the ruins.

When turning the angle of a grove of walnut-trees, he saw something white gliding through the shade; and, aware of the habits of the French peasantry, which are somewhat the same as those of their ancestors of the thirteenth century, as described in "Tristan le Voyageur," he guessed that the emergency must be rather uncommon which induced any one of them to brave the terrors of a wood after sunset.

"It is a woman, however," thought he, "by her

garments, which makes it less extraordinary; for that sex, which men call the softer, will dare the very devil, when occasion calls." He followed the track of the figure, concealing himself from observation as well as possible; but, with all his precaution, while turning hastily round a tree, he had nearly stumbled upon the object of his pursuit. She was not alone. The arm of a young man encircled her waist as she leant her forehead upon his shoulder, sobbing so bitterly, that it was no wonder the stranger's approach should have been unobserved.

"Humph!" said he to himself—"the old affair! And I, who have walked, ridden, and ran all over Europe, have come here a lover hunting! How the great Frederick would laugh! But, softly, let us hear what all this salt water is about. Puppets, begin!" and without the slightest ceremony, the traveller ensconced himself behind the tree, and bending his head sidelong through the branches, planted his ear at a convenient opening.

"Weep not, my love," said the youth—"or rather, weep on, that I may still kiss away your tears. But courage! all will yet be well. I cannot fail to obtain some employment in Nantes; and however small may be my gains, I shall save something; for I will live on little else than thoughts of you, which, though passing rich in themselves, will cost nothing. Only give me a year! Let me find you unchanged—here, on this very spot, and we shall still laugh at the world.

"Alas, Victoire, I fear I shall never laugh again! My uncle seems resolved on my sacrifice; and without

you—without a human being to befriend or countenance me—I tremble even for my own firmness."

"Dear Adeline, they cannot force you to the altar! We do not marry in France as they do in Prussia, where the order of the great Frederick suffices equally well to inflict a spouse and the bastinado! Only be firm in your refusal, endure their taunts, be deaf to their entreaties, and when your thoughts vex you, send them to Nantes and to me."

"I will try," said the girl, sobbing anew.

"Try! You must promise—nay, swear!"

"I do promise—I do swear!"

"Then thus I seal the oath—and now good night; it will be time enough to-morrow to say farewell." The good night, however, was a long one; the lovers appearing to think, with Juliet,

> "— parting is such sweet sorrow,
> That I could say good night till it be morrow."

"A pestilence on your adieus!" muttered the stranger at last, losing his temper—"What, again? Fie, fie! Will't not do yet? There—now home with you, in the devil's name, lest I knock your two heads together!" The loving couple at length separated, or, as the novel-writers say, "tore themselves away;" and the listener emerged from his concealment, and walked, with great strides, after the female.

"The thing is clear," said he, as he walked. "That young fellow will do no good till he is married; and the girl will pine herself into a consumption. Now what is

to be done? The great Frederick, as the youth justly remarked, would do as he listed, *sans cérémonie*, and the King of France would perhaps send the intruding suitor, at a moment's warning, to the army or the gallies. For me, I disapprove of such doings. I stand up for the rights of man; and I flatter myself that I shall be able to bring about the desired result without violence to any party. Good evening, Mademoiselle Adeline, (clapping his hand upon her shoulder, as he overtook her). How do you do? Fine weather! So you want to marry Victoire? Do me the honour of taking my arm."

Adeline, after an interjectional "Oh!" scarcely amounting to a scream, curtsied, bridled, blushed, and finally looked the stranger full in the face. He was a respectable looking man, well on to forty years of age; and his physiognomy, although assuredly presenting no traits of beauty, was yet perfectly agreeable. There was indeed a certain something in his eye, which, if met with in one of her own class, the peasant girl would have called presumption; but occurring in his (for the stranger wore a handsome though travel-stained cloak, and a pair of well cultivated mustachios), seemed to her an air of superiority arising from station and habit. Adeline, in short, was a physiognomist, as all women are—or at least acted as if she was so, as all women do; and after a moment's scrutiny, she accepted the offered arm of the unknown, and walked with him towards the village.

"Good," said the stranger, as she finished her

simple story; "I shall set all that to rights in the morning. Go home, child, and say your prayers, and trust to—"

"To whom?"

"To Heaven." They separated at the entrance of the village, Adeline tripping away to her uncle's house, and the traveller striking fire from the flints in the street, as he strode towards the auberge.

By the faint light from the windows, the latter observed that his way was marshalled by some one, who ever and anon turned round his head to look at him. He thought the figure resembled that of the lover of Adeline; but before he had time to overtake him, he had vanished, and the stranger found himself under the signboard of the auberge, which swung creaking over his head. A loud authoritative knock demanded admittance; and in a few seconds this was followed by a sound kick, which made the door tremble on its hinges.

"Within, there! ho!" shouted the traveller, waxing wrath, as with hand and foot he continued the battery.

"Holy name of God!" ejaculated the aubergiste, as he opened the door, "who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am a traveller, and I want a night's lodging. Why the plague are you not more alive? Never mind, there's a famous fire! Give you good evening, ladies and gentlemen—how are you? Fine weather—and so forth. Come, I command you to be social: bring a bottle of wine and something to eat. What, not a

word? How do *you* do, madam? Humph! or you, sir? Humph! Here's a genteel party of mandarins! They do nothing but shake their heads at me. Then I shall sup alone. Shew me the best bed-room. Come along!"—and, seizing the only candle in the apartment, the unknown went out into the passage, and was speedily heard clambering up the stairs.

"Here's a pretty business!" said the landlord. "By the holy Mary, he is as daring a ruffian as ever trod the scaffold! And so he was seen prowling about the wood all the evening?—and his two companions—"

"Two!—a dozen, at least!"

"Very well, with one woman."

"One!—one a-piece, you mean, neighbour."

"Dreadful! Why they will surround the house, and cut all our throats before daylight. Are you mad, Marie — to take silver spoons and forks to a guest like that? give him rusty iron, a bit of stale meat, or a luncheon of black bread, and a bottle of sour wine, and perhaps he will think us too poor to be worth robbing. You will stay with us, neighbours, to get over this critical night? A thousand thanks! Now let us bolt the doors and windows, and arm ourselves as well as we can; and Marie, cover the table, and let us have a measure of the best stuff in the house."

While these preparations were going on below, the stranger was making mouths over his supper above. In vain he endeavoured to persuade himself that the bread was wholesome, and that since it was eaten as customary food by the peasantry, it might well serve the

purpose of a hungry traveller. As for the meat, it was absolute carrion; but some persons of the nicest taste, he argued, could not eat mutton till it perfumed the whole table: and, touching the forks, although certainly not silver, they were of a much more serviceable metal. The oftener he returned to the charge, however, the more distasteful grew the viands; and at length, in high disgust, he filled up a tumbler of wine, and emptied it into a mouth that just held the measure.

This was the climax of his mishap. His eyes appeared ready to start from his head; and his cheeks, swollen like a tun with the infernal beverage, became of a red heat. How he got rid of the mouthful it is not for us to tell to ears polite; but Sancho Pancha, when his lips rejected the draught of pure element bestowed upon him by Maritornes, was a model of good breeding compared to the unknown. The empty glass sprang from his hand at the same instant, as if by an involuntary gesture, and shivered itself against the door; the bottle, following the example, darted through the window into the street; and the table, with all its contents, rolled upon the floor, while the choleric guest, jumping and dancing in the midst of them, seemed intent upon annihilating the causes of his displeasure.

He at length threw off his clothes in mighty dudgeon, and went to bed—but not to sleep. He was kept awake for the first hour by his reflections and his hunger; and by that time the company below, having waxed valiant over their wine, gave testimony of their defiance by songs and shouts that continued till the dawn. When at length, however, he did sleep, over-

wearied nature made amends for the delay; and it was mid-day before he awoke.

His first thought was of breakfast; and he had no sooner dressed than he sallied down stairs in search of something wherewith to appease his hunger. The parlour was empty, so was the kitchen, so was the larder; every soul had gone out, and the fire, following the example, had gone out too. He ascended again to search the bed-rooms, when the welcome cry of an infant fell upon his ear; and, on entering the apartment from which it proceeded, he found the hostess sitting up in bed, with her baby ready dressed for the christening.

"Good morning, madame," said the guest, "don't be frightened—no ceremony, I beg. Have you got any thing to eat? What a pretty little pig!—a boy, or a girl? Never mind—Great Jupiter, what do I see! A roast fowl, a loaf of white bread, and a bottle of—not vinegar, for a dollar! Come, you and I will make ourselves comfortable. There—don't eat too fast; it is a bad habit with me;" and, devouring as he talked, the hungry traveller, at length, appeased his appetite, with more real pleasure in the performance of the feat than he had ever experienced before in his life. As for the dame, she was first alarmed, then amused, then delighted. She, too, was a physiognomist; and she fancied the strange abrupt manner of her companion to be nothing else than the inconsequence of high rank.

"And now," said he, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he set down the empty tumbler beside the empty bottle—"tell me all about it."

"Monsieur is so good," she replied, "to take such an interest in our little concerns, and eat so hungrily, and make no bones of nothing! Well, the thing is this. In two hours comes on the christening, and as yet we have never a godfather provided. The matter would have been settled last evening, but the whole house was thrown out of window by a highwayman, and my husband did nothing all night but drink wine, and sing 'Henri Quatre.' So, you see, he is off this morning to ask M. Prudhomme; and Victoire is off to engage the priest; and—"

"Who is Victoire?"

"Alas! he is only a distant relation of mine, brought up by us out of good-will. He is so gentle and good, and so graceful a dancer, and so much in love! He sets out for Nantes, the moment the christening is over, to push his fortune; and, although one heart only may break, there are fifty that will be sore for him in the village."

"And why should any heart be so silly as to break for him?"

"Why, there is Adeline—a girl who is all heart, and no mind. She will mope, and pine, and tremble, and faint; and, perhaps, be frightened into marrying another—and then die."

"And who is Adeline?"

"The daughter of M. Prudhomme."

"What! our godfather?"

"The same."

"And would you really confer so sacred a trust

upon such a beast? No, no, we shall manage better —*I'll* stand godfather!"

"O, monsieur! Well, only think! But what will my husband say? To be sure he *is* an odious, old, miserly wretch, that Prudhomme—and what a satisfaction it would be to my poor, pretty, little pitty-patty-poppety-pop, to have a real downright gentleman for a sponsor! Dear sir, you overwhelm me with your benevolence; and if the thing can be managed—"

"Bah! the thing is done. Leave it all to me. Get ready the best way you can, and in two hours I shall be at the altar;" and so saying, the stranger strode out of the room, and the house, and, clambering through the little gardens and vineyards on the side next the hill, disappeared among the trees.

The meditations of the hostess were not without perplexity. Had she but thought of asking the name of the unknown, all would have been right; but as the matter stood, it was necessary to thwart her husband's wishes, and embroil him with the wealthiest man in the village, for what must appear to be nothing more than a whim. Presently her very convictions of the rank of the traveller began to shake and waver. Was it consistent, she inquired, with the dignity of a noble, or even a gentleman, to be so monstrously hungry? Where were his servants and his baggage? Had he arrived in a carriage, or on horseback? No sound of wheels or hoofs had passed that day. Or on foot?—her imagination sickened at the idea; and as she heard

her husband's step upon the stairs, she sank back upon the bed in absolute dismay.

The jolly host entered, dragging in with him the half-unwilling M. Prudhomme, whose bowels rejoiced at the thought of the good fare they expected to-day, but whose miserly heart trembled at the vision of the sponsorial gift.

"Come, madame," cried the former, "here is our friend, ready to do his part in converting your little heathen to the true faith. Sacré matin! What is the matter? Are you ill? Have you fainted?"

"Barbarous, unfeeling man!" said the lady, in a broken voice; "I might have been dead and buried for you! Here have I been left to the care of the angels since daylight; and, in a situation that requires the most delicate and unremitting attention, have been obliged not only to attend on myself, but on the business of the house. It was not merely necessary to provide breakfast for your guests, but even the affair which you affected to take upon yourself, and which, surely, a sick and bed-rid woman should have had nothing to do with, fell upon my shoulders. Well, well, I do not inquire where you have been, or how many *petit verres* you have drank: the business is settled—I have provided you a sponsor; and if that tedious Victoire will only come back to tell us that the priest is ready, you may go to the altar in peace." During this harangue the husband stood, as is meet, with drooping ears and an air of penitent humility; but when it touched upon the conclusion, he raised his head in alarm.

"*You* provided a sponsor, madame!" said he,

"what the devil do you mean by that? Did not I go out to fetch one myself?—and is not our neighbour here come on purpose? Stand upon your legs, M. Prudhomme, and don't squeeze yourself up to nothing, and turn your head awry over your shoulder, like a trussed fowl."

"M. Prudhomme," said the lady, sturdily, "does us infinite honour; but, being a sensible man, he will, no doubt defer, under the circumstances, this manifestation of his benevolence till the next occasion."

"Thunder and furies! what devil is this that has come into your brain? You! a sponsor! who is he, for the love of Heaven?"

"Why, I'll tell you—he is a gentleman—and a man of consequence—and—and—"

"His name! his name!"

"His name!" echoed M. Prudhomme, whose cadaverous cheeks began to flush with human passion, as the affront became too palpable to suffer him to sneak it over.

"Why his name is—is—is—a secret. But only wait till the priest asks him in due form, and then you will be surprised!" The scene that ensued cannot be "done" into English; as it consisted of untranslatable oaths and imprecations on the part of the husband, and tears, revilings, fits and faintings on that of the wife. The poor infant, as if anxious to testify its own concern in the question, kept up an incessant squall; while the dumb-show was supplied by M. Prudhomme, who, turning from one party to the other, ducked his head between his shoulders, spread out

his fingers, and turned up the white of his eyes, in a manner eloquently expressive of dismay and deprecation. In the meantime, no Victoire made his appearance, and each of the belligerents began to hope that something had occurred to put off the stormy ceremony till another day—when suddenly the chimes of the parish bell rose above the din, proclaiming that the priest was already at the altar, and the whole village on their way to the church.

As the unknown strode towards the wood, he congratulated himself on the dexterity with which he had managed every thing, and more especially on the philosophy with which he had submitted to so intolerable a supper.

"The great Frederic," said he, "would have been satisfied with sending the parties handcuffed to the next commandant, with an order—'Marry me this man and woman instantly!' but I, I am greater than the great Frederic himself. While respecting the prejudices of the people, I arrive at the same end. I appear a friend rather than a tyrant. I worm into their secrets like a being of supernatural power; I possess myself of their history, as if by magic, and act conformably to their wants and wishes. This is generalship. This is the art which, applied to the purposes of war, makes heroes and conquerors!" His soliloquy was interrupted by the appearance of Adeline, walking slowly, and apparently sobbingly away, in an opposite direction; and the stranger quickened his steps till he was by her side.

"What, in tears again, mademoiselle!" said he. "Come, come, no more salt water! Look up—it is I—I want to have a little private chat with you. Hold up your head, child, and look me in the face, and you will be sure to know me. What, not a word! —not a look! Halt, you little puss, or I'll cashier you!" At every word the disconsolate maiden turned her shoulder to him with a pout and a sob; but when, at last, he seized her arm, and endeavoured to wheel her about, she turned suddenly round, and lent him such a slap upon the face as made the wood ring again!

"Take that!" she exclaimed, her cheeks swollen with anger, and her eyes red with weeping. "Take that, you intolerable busy-body! Who asked you to meddle, I wonder? Highwayman though you be, what have I done to you that you should rob me of my lover? A thief breaks only doors, but you have broken my heart! Get you gone, you ill-omened wretch, for surely a curse is in the glance of your eye—get you gone, I say, you odious, base, ugly, elderly individual!" and Adeline, as her philippic rose to a whoop of mingled grief and indignation, turned suddenly away, and fled towards the village.

"What an animal is a woman!" cogitated the stranger; "reason and passion, that in men master one another by turns, are in her mixed up like charcoal and sulphur, and in their union form gunpowder! But come, there is Victoire; let us leave the feminine to her own crotchets, and apply our consolation to the nobler sex. What ho! my lad," tapping him smartly

on the shoulder, "you look as surly as if you had lost your mistress! I want to talk the matter over with you; and, to begin, you must know I like the girl myself!"

"Leave me — leave me;" said Victoire, in a suppressed voice, issuing from between his clenched teeth.

"I tell you," continued the stranger, "I do like the girl myself; and if she *is* a little inconstant in her humour, why, she is a woman, you know, and there is no more to be said."

"Harkye!" said the young man, stopping suddenly short, and drawing himself up to his full height, as he bent a glance as dark as thunder upon his companion—"What is this for? Will the seduction of the mistress not suffice for your purpose? Is it necessary for your triumph that you insult the jilted suitor into the bargain? Caitiff! you have already foiled me in love — will you try your fortune in battle?" The stranger opened his eyes in amazement, while a smile of satire or contempt curled his lip as he replied, "Peace, good youth — you talk wildly. For me, I war not with peasants!" The words, however, were scarcely uttered, when he found himself felled to the ground! In vain he attempted to get up — he was inextricably entangled in the folds of his immense cloak; and in another instant his agile enemy had torn a branch from a tree, and commenced a course of discipline on his body which, if voluntarily inflicted, would have saved the most hardened soul in the whole spiritual domains of the Pope. It would be

in vain to endeavour to describe the fiery indignation of the unknown as he lay writhing on the earth, or the deep and withering feeling of dishonour with which he gathered himself up when alone. He was a man in whose grasp the triumphant stripling, in a deliberate contest, would have been as a dove in the talons of an eagle. He was a soldier, with a ready hand, a stout heart, and nerves as tough as the steel of his sword.

"Thunder of heaven!" cried he, as he threw the glance of a vulture around him; "if I could but crush him into the earth with my foot, and cover up for ever the abhorred deposit, I might forget this hour! But there is still a means of vengeance! Yes, he shall feel my power in his inmost marrow, and die a living death of expiation, till the grave itself shall appear a prize and an achievement!" and so saying, he gathered up the skirts of his cloak, and began to run with the speed of a famished wolf, coasting round the houses, and taking the way to the distant château inhabited by the prefect of the commune.

The family of the host, including the young child, the most important personage in the ceremony, was the last of all the village at the scene of action. This delay was commented upon with great severity by the gossips; and when at last the party was seen entering the gates, the appearance of the different individuals composing it was observed with more than common interest. Indeed, the wild and embarrassed air of the host, the timid look and faltering pace of M. Prud-

homme, and the haughty, and somewhat ferocious bearing of Victoire, were enough to rouse the curiosity of any one. They walked direct to the church-door, scarcely noticing the salutations they received; and it was observed, that a sigh of relief broke from more than one of the group, as they saw that the priest was alone at the altar.

Still they did not enter. Some mysterious feeling appeared to hold them back at the very threshold. They had the air of expecting that something would happen. As for the host, notwithstanding all his swaggering, having been brought up in wholesome awe of his wife, his heart misgave him, and it was with a faint voice, and no very earnest manner, that he besought M. Prudhomme to advance; while the latter, instigated on one hand by pride to complete the adventure, and dissuaded on the other by a kind of indefinite fear, stood pale and irresolute, gazing every now and then over his shoulder, with the look of a man who expected to see an apparition. Adeline, in the meantime, kept aloof as far as the area of the churchyard would allow, spelling pertinaciously the inscriptions on the tomb-stones; and Victoire, with his eyes fixed on the ground, his arms folded, his brows knit, the staff of a wayfarer in his hand, and a knapsack strapped upon his shoulders, stood beside his party as motionless as a statue.

The strange stillness of the scene was at length broken, by the appearance of two men coming quickly into the churchyard. They were the criminal officers of the district; and, although familiarly known to

every one present, and probably expected by many to form peaceable spectators of the ceremony, their approach produced the same kind of sensation as that of the headsman at an execution. The instinct of the people was right; for, the two men singling out Victoire, threw themselves suddenly upon him, and handcuffed him before he had time to start from his reverie.

"No opposition, if you are wise!" whispered one of them, who knew him; "as it is, you are to get the gallies for life — but that is better than the scaffold!"

"What is my crime?" demanded Victoire.

"An attempt at murder."

"Who is my accuser?"

"The Baron of Falkenstein."

"The Baron of Falkenstein!" muttered the host, surlily — "then my wife is partly right after all, for if he is a baron, he must be a gentleman, were he a beggar."

"The Baron of Falkenstein!" said M. Prudhomme, regaining suddenly at least two feet of his stature. "I have known your German barons, whose estates were deserted by the very mice for lack of food. Come, neighbour!"

"Ay, ay, let us lose no more time."

"Halt!" cried a voice at the moment, which made every one jump — "Fall in there, in the rear! Now step out, in good order — Forward! Ho!" — and the stranger, placing himself at the head of the march, strode into the church. The command was given so

suddenly, and in so authoritative a tone, that no one thought of disobeying; and, even if the principal actors in the ceremony had been mutinously inclined, their motions were so constrained by the eagerness of the rear ranks, that they must have been carried to the altar in spite of themselves. Men, women, and children crowded round the rails, to the great astonishment of the priest; even the criminal officers, with the prisoners in handcuffs, formed part of the audience; and all stood gazing at the unknown with that mixture of awe and curiosity which might be inspired by a supernatural being. The appearance of this personage was truly extraordinary. His dress was torn, and stained with mud, and his face was as pale as marble — all but one bright red spot that burned ominously on the brow.

"Go on!" cried he, impatiently, as he smote the pavement with his iron heel. The priest looked at him, and obeyed in a tremor. The several questions were then asked of the different parties.

"What is your name?" said the querist, addressing the unknown.

"Joseph."

"Well — what more?"

"Second."

"*M. Joseph Second* — Your profession?"

"Emperor of Germany!" The book fell from the hands of the priest; a sound resembling a strong inhalation of the breath ran round the crowd; and all bethinking themselves suddenly that they were in the temple of God, sank simultaneously on their knees.

The only persons who remained standing, were Adeline on one side of the altar, and Victoire on the other.

"Come — despatch!" said the imperial sponsor; and the ceremony was hurried through, and a new member admitted within the pale of the Christian church. The emperor then, placing a heavy purse in the lap of the child, was about to move away, when he was confronted by Adeline.

"I am *now* ready," said she, "to receive your majesty's commands."

"*You* ready! — why, you atrocious baggage, after —"

"*Was it sore?*" said she, tossing her head. "In France the men receive such things as compliments from a lady!" A struggle took place for a moment in the emperor's features, which ended in a Ha! ha! ha! that made the church ring again. His mirth, however, provoked by the Frenchness of our heroine, was instantly checked, as Victoire, eluding his guards, pressed forward.

"What do I hear?" cried the young man — "Is it possible that I was deceived? Have you, too, insulted his majesty?"

"A woman," said Adeline, proudly, "cannot insult a man."

"Nor a peasant an emperor!" added Victoire, in a low tone, fixing his eyes upon the ground.

Joseph mused for a moment — he cast a look upon the young and beautiful pair before him — bit his lips till the blood sprang — and knit his brows so fiercely, that the young children hid their faces in their mothers'

aprons. At length, shaking the rails of the altar with a violence that threatened to bring all down, he shouted in a voice of thunder to the priest — "Marry me this man and woman instantly! — The great Frederick is right," added he, to himself; "the common people are unfit for the government of reason! O, would to Heaven that I had done this at first!"

The ceremony was completed to the perfect satisfaction of M. Prudhomme, who could not, however, be prevailed upon to rise from his knees during its performance; the bride was given away by the royal traveller himself, and her dowry paid to Victoire with a liberality more befitting the rank of the donor, than the humble station of the parties; and when all was over, the Baron of Falkenstein, as he chose to be called, alias the Emperor Joseph the Second — this famous king-errant, the friend and rival of the great Frederick, and one of the most extraordinary characters of his time — drove away from the scene of his mortification in the prefect's carriage, and was never more beheld on the banks of the Loire.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PIRATE OF THE LOIRE.

From Chantocé to Ingrande the route presents all the finer characteristics of the Loire, such as we have hitherto seen it—here a vineyard, there a wooded eminence, and between, the proud river rolling majestically along in glory and in joy. The little town of Ingrande appears to be cut in twain by a narrow street; and when you cross this street you are no longer in the department of the Maine-et-Loire, but in that of the Loire Inférieure. This is nothing to-day; but in former times, when one territorial division was Anjou, and the other Brittany, the place must have frequently found itself in a very awkward predicament.

The only barriers which separated two distinct people — not seldom at loggerheads — were a couple of posts, each painted in stripes with the colours of its own duchy, and a huge stone, placed as a terminus by both parties in the middle of the town. Only think of the effect of a declaration of war between the Angevines and Bretons! Fancy the looks of alarm and hostility interchanged by the two sides of the street! Here a tailor flourishes his shears threateningly, as he looks across at a cross-legged double — once double, but now, alas, quits! — and there a belligerent baker gets

up a field-piece to his first-floor windows to play upon a friend and rival on the other side of the way.

But the tragedies of the heart!—the fated Leanders who crossed at night that waveless Hellespont—

> "When love, who sent, forgot to save
> The young, the beautiful, the brave:"

the lonely Heros watching in their *attic* bowers for the too dangerous visit, and venturing timidly to place at their lattice for a signal—a farthing candle! Even in time of profound peace, however, this debateable town was not without its adventures arising from the peculiarity of its situation. The Bretons, for instance, paid at one time as a tax only two liards in the pound of salt, while the Angevines were charged by their rulers thirteen or fourteen sous. The consequence, of course, was, that it was no uncommon thing for a quiet citizen, on emerging from his porch in the evening, to be knocked down by a bag of this commodity, travelling, duty free, through the air from the opposite side of the lane. The church also took its share, as usual, in fomenting disturbances; and it was owing to an incongruity of tastes or opinions between the respective bishops of Anjou and Brittany that the two sides of the town came to blows over the quarrel that one party breakfasted on bacon, and the other on pilchards.

The view of Ingrande from the river gives you the idea of a city—one hardly knows why. As you approach nearer and nearer the illusion diminishes, and you are at last greatly amazed to find so magnificent an

object degenerated into a snug and compact little town of twelve or thirteen hundred inhabitants.

The river has now wholly changed its character. The first decided indication was Montjan ; but this only strikes the voyager as a grand and solitary exception to the general rule. He is here undeceived. The rich and even magnificence of the scene is mingled with the wild and fantastic. The fertile plains of the Loire, no longer undulating into hills, are now studded with gigantic steeps, that fling their dark shadow upon the waters beneath. On the left bank, rising on one of these abrupt heights, there is a tower which fascinates irresistibly the traveller's attention. It commands the entire valley of the Loire ; and, from the nature of the country beyond, appears to dominate all La Vendée. This is Saint Florent-le-Viel, or the Montglonne, on the site of which a temple was built by Charlemagne, and destroyed by the Normans. Its later history is still more memorable ; for on this spot began the fatal war of La Vendée. Two hundred young men, assembled at the drawing of the militia, suddenly attacked the military, overcame them, obtained possession of two field-pieces, and, flushed with the victory, gave the signal of insurrection to the country.

Near Saint Florent is the bourg of Marillais, celebrated in former times for its sanctity. It is not very easy to say exactly to what was owing a reputation which, in the middle ages, drew so vast a concourse of pilgrims that one hundred oxen were required for their daily nourishment. We rarely find, however, that causes are proportionate in magnitude to their effects ;

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner, R. A.

Engraved by R. Brandard

and, as the most absurd trifle will in our own time turn the tide of fashion to a particular watering-place, so it frequently happened, in the triumphant days of Catholicism, that a miracle, which would be reckoned poor and paltry in one's own parish, drew the devout, the penitent, and the idle of all Christendom to the spot. From the steeps of Saint Florent, and more especially from their culminating point, called the Cavalier, the finest views of the Loire, so far as we have yet wandered, are obtained.

On the right bank of the river, a little lower down, the small town of Varades offers also some good points of view, particularly from the porch of the Magdaleine, which borders the valley, crowned with the ruins of an old château. Varades is seated in a vast area of meadows and pastures, with trees in the distance behind, and the river in front, broken by islands covered with groves.

Three leagues and a half from Varades by land is Ancenis, a town of four thousand inhabitants, which merits some attention. In modern history, beginning with the wars of the Plantagenets, it is one of the most celebrated places on the Loire, having suffered almost incredible vicissitudes till the year 1488, when it was fairly blown to pieces by Louis VI., and the inhabitants scattered over the face of the country. It was fortified anew at the commencement of the sixteenth century, and again demolished by Henry IV.; and in 1700 the château was restored from its ruins, but with only the shadow of its ancient strength.

Ancenis, however, has other associations more attrac-

tive to the romantic and imaginative. It is supposed to have been the abiding place of that famous colony of Samnitæ mentioned by Strabo, with circumstances so strange and unworldly. The two sexes, it appears, lived separately, the women inhabiting an island on the Loire, and only meeting their husbands at appointed times on the continent. On the island, supposed by M. Travers to be that of Bouin, there was a temple dedicated to Bacchus, in the service of which deity the women passed most of their time. On a certain day in the year they were accustomed to uncover the temple, and replace the roof before sunset; when each of the devotees took an equal share in the task, and carried her own portion of the materials. If it chanced that any one slipped in the course of the labour, and allowed her load to fall, the rest immediately threw themselves upon her, with frightful cries, tore her in pieces, and carried the mangled remains into the temple as an offering to the god. Strabo adds, that a year never passed without some victim falling a sacrifice to this terrible superstition.

This story, which is a very good one if let alone, is explained by certain learned Thebans as follows. The men, say they, were occupied with war and the chase, which kept them constantly on the main land; while the business of the women was to manufacture salt, by drying the sea-water in shallow interstices of the rocks, by the rays of the sun. These women uncovered, on a certain day of the year, the old store of salt, to add to it the new; and having completed the operation, restored the cover before the evening. They

carried their burdens, as they do to-day, on the head; and if any one stumbled on the sharp and slippery rocks, her superstitious companions, in order to turn away the evil presage, sacrificed her on the spot. Hence the vulgar belief which attaches all manner of misfortune to the act of spilling the salt at table.

This is not amiss as a speculation, with the exception of the latter part, touching the sin of salt-spilling. Bacchus, in early mythology, was only a name of the sun; and it is not unlikely that the Samnite women should have worshipped the luminary from which they derived their subsistence. The sun, however, being at once a powerful deity, and the original and only manufacturer of salt, it is probable that this article was held to be sacred, and that, more especially on the solemn occasion of gathering it in, the fact of any one stumbling under the blessed burden, was supposed to indicate the displeasure of the god. The popular superstition, therefore, is of very ancient and respectable parentage; having been, in all probability, derived by the Greeks and Romans themselves, from that earlier and simpler idolatry described by Job, when he says — "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above."

The barbarism of one of the customs we have alluded to, is strangely at variance with the mingled poetry and philosophy of the other. The wisest legislator in the world never invented a happier expedient for making

a wife always charming, or a husband always obedient, than the periodical separation of the sexes among the Samnites. Compared to this, the practice of the Spartans was something gross and sensual. With them, the husband stole secretly to the bower of his mistress-wife, as if to the rendezvous of forbidden love; no one knew the individual to whom his fortunes were thus mysteriously and inextricably linked; and if in public a higher flush appeared upon his cheek, as he met accidentally the eyes intended only for the stars of his solitude, he had to endure the laconic jests of his comrades, as if detected in some boyish passion. With the Samnites, all was joy and publicity. The day of meeting was a high festival of the heart. Issuing from the ancient walls of Ancenis, the husbands, brothers, and sons of the colony, descended this glorious and romantic river to its confluence with the ocean. They saw afar off the holy island, sacred to their god and their affections, which it was death for the foot of a man to touch. A thousand hearts beat wildly at the sight — a thousand voices rose at once in the clear air of their lovely France. But they dared not approach nearer; they lay idly upon their oars, gazing with almost painful intenseness upon the object of their interest, where the temple of Bacchus glittered in the beams of the actual god of whom he was himself only a type or a name. A stir takes place on the shore. It is the hour when religion consents to the wishes of love. The light canoes of their mistress-wives are seen putting out from the beach, and breasting the surges of the downward river. Then begins the race of passion. Each flag or streamer

that wantons wildly in the breeze is a signal recognised by kindred hearts. The two fleets at length meet; and wives and husbands, brothers and sisters, mothers and sons, are clasped in one another's arms. The combined navy returns to Ancenis, and the stillness of night, as they near the ancient walls, is broken with mirth and music.

At Ancenis the voyager on the river falls in with a very strange adventure. A steam-boat, resembling his own, puts out from the antique-looking port, advances boldly, runs alongside, throws out her grappling-irons, and boards him yard-arm and yard-arm. In vain the engineer goes on with his duty, the paddles work, and the vessel cuts through the water — the pertinacious privateer holds on like death. The hapless traveller is despoiled in a twinkling of his luggage and effects, and finally, his person is seized, and he is transferred, a prisoner of war, to the deck of the enemy. The prize is then cut adrift, and makes the best of her way back to Angers, while the victorious pirate, laden with booty and captives, proceeds to Nantes. The whole transaction does not take many minutes, and if one's head is not very cool, or one's ear not very well awake to a foreign language, it bears a most sinister, not to say alarming, aspect.

It is said, that under Francis I. and Henri II., there were three vessels of considerable size constructed at Ancenis; a fact which is denied by M. de Villiers, on the score of the tide reaching only two leagues higher than Nantes. This is, no doubt, the case to-day; but nineteen hundred years ago the phe-

nomena of the river were very different, when Brutus, by the command of Cæsar, constructed a fleet, for the purpose of combatting the Venetes, in the country of the Andegaves, or Anjou.

Nearly opposite Ancenis is the bourg of Liré, the birth-place of Du Bellay, surnamed by his contemporaries, the French Catullus. While residing at Rome, in what to him was a kind of banishment, this agreeable poet and amiable man composed a series of sonnets, recalling the charms and delights of his unforgotten Loire. The reader may not be displeased to see one of them.

Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage!
Où comme celui-là qui conquit la toison,
Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,
Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge!

Quand reverrai-je, hélas! de mon petit village
Fumer la cheminée, et en quelle saison
Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,
Qui m'est une province, et beaucoup davantage?

Plus me plait le séjour qu'un bâtit mes aïeux,
Que des palais Romains le front audacieux;
Plus que le marbre dur me plait l'ardoise fine;
Plus mon Loire Gaulois que le Tibre Latin,
Plus mon petit Liré que le Mont-Palatin,
Et plus que l'air marin la douceur Angevine.

Soon after leaving Ancenis, we glide insensibly into a new world. Every thing here is heavy, massive, and colossal; the broad river, blackened with the huge shadow of its banks, rolls sternly and majestically

Drawn by J. M.W. Turner R. A.

Engraved by W. Miller

between; a meaning silence seems to brood in the air; and the excited wanderer feels as if entering into some region of old enchantment.

But not the wanderer alone, who, like ourselves, floats nameless and unnoticed down the stream, or steals along those hoary ramparts of nature, listening to the mysterious music of the wind, as it mingles with the far and sullen plunge of the waters,—calling up, as with a name and a spell, the unwilling phantoms of history, and the spectral shadows of romance—and musing over forgotten graves and nameless ruins, till the present, with its outward and visible forms, vanishes from his eyes, and buried ages rise again from the gulf of time, and the antique world is renewed, both to soul and sense, not as a vision, but a reality. Not he alone who, with a weak and ineffectual voice, repeats the echoes of the Loire, syllabling his thought into faint sounds that rise upon the inattentive ear of the world, "like the remembrance of a dream:"—but they, too, the children of genius, whose names are as household words in the mouths of their fellow-men, to whom is given the power of reflecting, as in a magic glass, the forms of this deified nature, which others only worship — here must they pause and linger; the God stirs omnipotently within them; fast and thick rain their ideas upon the cartoon; and, wrought under their enchantments, the image destined for the world's idolatry, becomes, not a dead copy of external forms, but a true original, endowed with life, and redolent of poetry.

No one who possesses a feeling of art, or an eye

for nature, after looking at the pieces which illustrate the present portion of the scenery of the Loire, will hesitate to confirm the application of this description to that gifted man, on whom destiny or whim has bestowed so unequal a companion. Here TURNER was in his element; he rioted in beauty and power; and if to the cold in soul and imagination his paintings may seem defective in mathematical accuracy, they will be identified at a single glance with the originals by all who can *feel* genius, and who are capable of seeing in nature something beyond its outward and tangible forms.

On the left bank, an imposing mass of mountains, crowded with ruins in the engraving, which are already among the things that were, rises majestically several hundred feet above the water's edge. Below, some antique arches, resembling the ruins of a bridge, throw themselves out into the river; and we wonder within ourselves at the hardiness which could have conceived the idea of spanning, with a stone construction, so vast a body of water as the Loire forms at this place. The bridge, however, extended no farther than we see it to-day; and the river, now so much expanded, rolled, in all probability, at the time of its erection, in a much narrower channel. It was here that, in the early part of the thirteenth century, a famous robber had his stronghold. Inhabiting himself a castle, perched on the summit of the steep — from which it seemed to glare around, with a jealous and threatening aspect, upon the whole valley of the Loire — his vassals lay watching below in the shadow of the bridge for the

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R.A. Engraved by R. Brandard

Chateau Hamelin

between Cudon and Ancenis.

passing mariner. In the day-time, it is probable that a regular demand of toll, or custom, was made, and that vessels lay to at the pier while complying with the extortion. But at night, if, either through heedlessness or daring, some desperate bark attempted to pass without paying the robber's fee, the scene was different. Shouts and signals echoed along the shore; lights flared instantaneously up in the midst of the darkness; and before the astonished wayfarers could determine either upon flight or battle, their ship was boarded, a gang of wild-looking men were upon the deck, a hand was upon every throat, and a dagger at every breast.

One starless night, a slight skiff, assisted both by wind and stream, was cutting rapidly through the water, evidently with the intention of passing the robber's den without waiting for a challenge. Two persons sat in the stern, one a young man, apparently of the higher ranks, and the other, a sick or timid boy, who rarely raised his head from the shoulder of his companion.

"Give way, my men!" cried the elder, sternly, as he saw, by the massive form of the mountain, sketched faintly against the sky, that they must be nearly opposite the bridge — "Concealment is of no farther use; we must now trust to the breeze, and the stream, and the strong arm, and the gallant heart. Give way! Give way!" The mariners struck their oars into the river cheerily, and the skiff danced forward as if she

would leap out of the water. At the moment a stir was heard on the bridge, followed by the challenge.

"Ahoy! Who passes?"

"A friend — good night!" was the reply — "Give way, my men! — give way, for the love of Heaven, and the honour of your chief!"

"Bring to, or we will sink you!"

"Another time! — good night!"

"Good night, then — till we meet again!" — and a hoarse laugh rung over the river. On the instant, a light resembling a rocket rose up from the bridge, and was instantly answered from different parts of the shore. The rowers, terrified and bewildered, looked round aghast. The night was darker than ever; they had lost the track of the channel; and every moment expected to strike against the rocks.

"Give way, in the name of all the devils!" shouted the chief — "Run ashore, or run any where, so that we escape a heavier mischance!" The men once more lay desperately to their oars, and the skiff sprang through the water like a living thing — when suddenly a shock, like that of death, made every one leap from his seat. They were still in deep water, but had run into the teeth of a heavy barge full of armed men.

"Give you good even, fair mariners!" said one of the strangers, stepping into the skiff. — "You are pressed for time, it appears; but at Chantoceau we know too much of good-breeding to let any one pass without exchanging courtesies! Lights, my merry men, and let us see whom we have to deal with." Several

torches flared up on the instant, disclosing a set of faces on which a long course of violence and crime had stamped the outlawry of nature.

"What is this?" growled the ruffian who appeared to be the chief, as he looked round in vain for the cargo—"Where be your merchandise, fellows—where your rich stuffs, or broad pieces, that you were so anxious to run contraband?"

"We have none of these," replied the young man in the stern, biting his lips with anger and impatience till the blood sprung; "I am no pedlar, I!—but a Breton knight, journeying towards Nantes. I have some few valuables on my person, however—such as a dozen broad pieces—which you may steal if you like."

"Steal! You mistake us, comrade, upon my honour. It is our custom to take freely what our friends choose to present as tokens of good will; and if they do not think proper to act genteelly, why we chuck them into the river—that is all! But, come, let us see who this silent brother is"—and he put forth his hand to uncover the boy's face.

"Forbear!" cried the other, starting between, and grasping the arm of the robber: "this is a woman, since it is necessary to make the avowal. She is a kinswoman of your enemy Pierre de Dreux, whom I, her accepted lover, Sir Roland de Juigné, have stolen from the tyranny of her jailors for the purpose of making her my wife. If you be thieves, take all we possess; but, having so done, if you be men, let us pass without farther detention!"

"Thieves! Why, thou most imbecile knight, a thief

would spare the booty of a brother in trade; but being true men, it would go against our conscience to suffer you to pass with your stolen property. Pierre de Dreux is, indeed, an enemy of mine; and it the more behoves me, therefore, to accept of the hostage which he and fate have sent me. Come, come, no frenzy here! or blood-letting and the cold-bath must be the remedies. Will it please you, fair maiden, to accept of so rough a hand as this while you step into the barge?" The lady hesitated for a moment, while she pressed her hand upon her brow; but at length, rising without assistance, she put her hand into that of the robber.

"Roland!" she said aloud, "to resist would, indeed, be frenzy. Guard well your life — guard well every drop of blood in your veins, for the sake of Marguerite! You have a task before you that will require both strength and courage; for to you only, under Heaven, I look for rescue or revenge."

"Well said!" cried the outlaw, lifting her into the barge. "Adieu, sir knight!"

"Till we meet again!" muttered Sir Roland through his teeth, as he threw himself down in the skiff, and buried his face in his hands.

"Hold! steady!" cried he, raising his head, after a time. The oars of the barge were heard faintly in the distance.

"Go on," said he. The men pulled anew with right good will; but were again arrested by the voice of their chief. The barge's oars were now no longer heard; and the sullen plunging of the river was the only sound that disturbed the silence of the night.

"Make for the shore," said Sir Roland; "pull close in! Not a word—not a look of hesitation! I ask no man to follow me, and will risk no life but my own." As the bows of the skiff touched the ground, he sprang upon the bank; and, walking rapidly away from the river, was out of sight in an instant.

That night, as the sentinel paced his solitary rounds on the edge of the plateau of Chantoceau, two hundred yards from the castle, he halted suddenly, as some object appeared in motion among the rocks and underwood near the bottom of the hill. He hesitated a moment as he was about to give the alarm, and the object disappeared.

"It is only a deer," said he, "coming to drink of the fresh springs of the mount. If he would but shew himself at a reasonable distance, it would be good sport to try a cast of my spear. He is there again; but, hark! a deer treads more delicately than to throw down the stones with such a clatter behind him! Were it not better just to sound one blast, and relieve myself from the chance of blame? But no, my comrades are in the midst of their carousals, and I shall only get laughed at for my pains. There again! It *is* a deer, or something that travels on four legs. What a zig-zag the fellow makes to come where he is wanted! and yet, if there was but a little moonlight, he is near enough already to afford a fair mark. I have missed him by a moment! He has bounded among the cliffs that edge the plateau. By the holy rood! my heart misgives me that it was no deer after all;" and he put the horn again

to his lips. As he ceased his self-communings, a man's head appeared above the horizon of rock, not twelve yards distant; and at the same instant the sentinel rolled upon the ground, transfixed by a lance.

"This is the first step!" said Sir Roland, hastily stripping the outward garments from his victim, and heaving the body over the cliffs. He then dressed himself at all points like a sentinel; and, muffling up his head as well as possible, began to pace to and fro, as if nothing had happened.

The time appeared long to the volunteer guard; but he dared not leave his post till relieved. A heavy footstep, however, was at length heard approaching from the castle, and he prepared to receive his unconscious comrade. The watchword of the latter was answered by a thrust of the lance; and, with scarcely a groan to convey to the echoes of the mount the news of the deed of terror, a second victim rolled lifeless on the ground. Sir Roland then walked leisurely towards the castle.

As he approached, the sounds of mirth and revelry, heard even at the distant outposts, became louder and wilder; and, when he had nearly reached this mansion of midnight feasting, he found that caution of any kind was unnecessary, so completely did the robbers trust to the natural defences of the place, and to their sentinels, posted at regular distances round the domain. He drew near to the wall, however, with stealthy pace, and standing on tiptoe, looked into one of the windows, from which the greater part of the din proceeded. This point of view commanded only a portion of the room. He

saw the outlaw-chief sitting in the midst of the revels, and the table before him lined on either side with men whose repulsive physiognomies, unveiled by intoxication, declared that they were the enemies of their kind. Turning away in disgust, mingled with thankfulness, since Marguerite was not of the party, the young knight resolved to examine that portion of the building which appeared to be dedicated to the sleeping apartments; but while passing another window, he looked in almost unconsciously, and saw, with a start at once of rage and terror, the unhappy girl seated as the mistress of the revels at the top of the table. She appeared to attract little notice from the banditti, who had by this time become accustomed to her presence at the table, and who were besides half drowned in the wine-cup. Some eyes, notwithstanding, were fixed upon her with a glassy stare which made Sir Roland shudder; and he half resolved to hazard a tap upon the window for the purpose of attracting her attention, and letting her know that she had at least one devoted friend near her.

Marguerite seemed at this moment as bloodless as a marble statue. She retained, however, a certain dignity of deportment, which either chilled or overawed her rude hosts; and it was perhaps owing to this that they had gradually relaxed in the insulting attentions which they had at first lavished upon her, till she was now left comparatively alone. Her eyes were fixed upon the table before her; and if it chanced that she was addressed by any one, her reply was conveyed in a monosyllable, and a coldly dignified bend of the head.

Sir Roland waited so long till she should raise her eyes that he grew almost frantic; and at length, unable to restrain his impatience — for the time was wearing away, and if his mistress retired to her chamber without observing him she was lost — he smote the casement suddenly and violently with his mailed hand. Some of the feasters looked up; but seeing only the cap of one of their comrades — for the knight concealed his face — they concluded the interruption to be merely one of those practical jests that are always permitted in the fellowship of crime. Marguerite did not even start at the noise. She either heard it not, or purposely appeared indifferent to all that was going on around her. The knight trembled with agitation. Already some symptoms appeared of the breaking up of the debauch; a bell rang, which was probably the signal for all to retire for the night; and, after a moment's mental debate, he rushed into the building, and posted himself at the door of the banqueting hall.

The feast was indeed at an end; and the rioters staggering in groups into the passage, and taking their way to their various dormitories. Dirty and ill-lighted, the place looked like a burying-vault; and it was no wonder that Sir Roland, dressed as one of themselves, and carefully concealing his face, should have escaped detection by men whose eyes were already half closed in sleep and intoxication. Marguerite at length appeared, led out by the chief with drunken gravity, and surrounded by a group of the men whose loathsome looks he had seen rivetted upon her face.

The knight pushed boldly forward among the crowd.

He even crossed the path of his mistress, and, partially uncovering his face, cast on her a meaning look; but she turned disdainfully away without raising her eyes sufficiently to admit of her recognising him. He pressed close to her side, and whispered her name; but she only stepped more quickly forward. At length, in desperation, he seized her hand, and grasped it tightly within his; but, with a gesture of horror, she shrunk back as if stung by a serpent. Her agitation was observed by those behind, and the daring act which caused it; and in an instant Sir Roland was seized by the neck, and dragged towards the door. It was fortunate that the passage was dark enough to prevent discovery, or his life would not have been worth a minute's purchase; but, as it was, the feasters imagined that some one of their humbler comrades, emboldened by wine, and fired by beauty, had ventured on the act of insubordination; and they contented themselves with ejecting him by main force. Sir Roland grasped his dagger, and almost resolved to use it; but the thought of Marguerite restrained him; and, suddenly ceasing to struggle, he was flung heavily over the threshold, and presently heard the rusty bolts of the fortress fastened behind him.

When Marguerite, with a hundred uncouth jests and railleries, was shewn into her chamber, her first business was to fasten the door, not only with its own bolts, but with the heaviest articles of furniture she could drag towards it. While engaged in this way,

however, she heard, in one of the pauses of her labour, a hoarse laugh without, which made her blood run cold; and, examining hastily the walls of the room, she found that any attempt at a barricade was hopeless, as several small low openings, leading to flights of steep stairs, communicated with the rest of the building. Marguerite then placed her lamp in a recess, and sitting down, waited motionless, and almost breathless, till the noise of clapping doors and calling voices died gradually away, and all was silence and darkness in the castle.

She then started quickly but noiselessly up, and approached the window, threw open the lattice, and looked out. The night was dark and gusty. The shadows of the trees, moving with the motion of the branches, assumed a spectral appearance which chilled her heart; and below, the supporters of the building, covered with thicker darkness, seemed to her terrified imagination, so many armed sentinels keeping their nightly watch. It was necessary, however, to act, and that promptly. In a short time daylight would begin to streak the east, when escape would be hopeless. Could she but gain the ground in safety — and the distance was not very great — favoured by the darkness of the night and the shadows of the trees and rocks, she might reach the banks of the Loire below the fatal bridge, and there await the passing of some of the merchant barks, which she knew trafficked daily on the river. Marguerite did not know that the plateau was sentinelled all round at regular distances; but

even had she been aware of this fact, she would have thought it less dreadful to die upon their spears than to remain alone and unprotected in this den of robbers.

She took the coverlid from the bed, and fastening one end to the single iron stanchion which ran up along the middle of the narrow window — and which was probably reckoned a sufficient security by men who never contemplated possessing so slight and delicately-shaped a captive — allowed the other to drop towards the ground, and soon found herself sitting on the outside ledge, and clinging to the bar, while she turned a look of dread, yet determination, below.

The next moment, grasping firmly her insecure ladder, she began her descent. The wind dashed her repeatedly against the wall, but she preserved her presence of mind, till, on reaching the end of the coverlid, she found herself still far, how far she knew not, from the ground. The darkness had deceived her, and she had miscalculated the height. One moment she was suspended in hopeless agony; the next, her overstrung nerves relaxed suddenly, as if snapping with the tension — her fingers opened — and, closing her eyes unconsciously, she suffered herself to fall, and descended — into the arms of a man!

At this termination to her daring adventure, all the heroine forsook the heart of Marguerite, and all the woman remained. A long, wild scream broke from her lips, which was repeated by the echoes of the castle, and rang over the whole circle of the plateau. She felt only the clasp of her odious supporter. His voice was

unheard — or, if it did at any time invade her ears, she only raised her's the higher, to drown the detested sounds: they at length forced themselves, however, upon her senses. To whisper — to soothe — to entreat were of no avail; and at last these words of mingled joy, terror, and astonishment, broke, like a clap of thunder, upon her soul — "It is Roland, unhappy girl, whom you thus devote to despair!"

It was enough. The name of her lover, uttered by his own lips, was a spell which instantaneously recalled her flying senses. But the castle was now alarmed. Lights were flaring in the windows; and the sound of opening doors, withdrawing bolts, and hoarse voices hallooing from tower to tower, mingled with the deafening peal of an alarm bell, and the fainter swell of the sentinel's horns rising from different points of the guarded circle.

"Can'st thou run, love?" said Roland.

"Like a deer — with thee at my side!"

"Then we have *one* chance! — They have not changed guard —" muttered he, as they commenced their flight; for his ear, practised in all the sounds that belong to the adventures of war, had discovered that no alarm was given from the post by which he had himself entered upon the plateau.

"Bravely done!" cried he, as they flew; "we shall escape them yet, my noble Marguerite!" — but his heart did not feel the hope which his tongue endeavoured to inspire. The whole summit of the mount seemed alive with enemies, each provided with a lantern, and flitting about like an evil spirit. The fugi-

tives could hear the challenges given to the line of sentinels, beginning with those posted nearest to the castle; and Sir Roland felt that the chances were by no means on his side that they should reach the vacant station before the flying patrol. Some accidental circumstance, however, the nature of which he did not know, occurred to detain their pursuers for a single instant; and that instant sufficed to place him and Marguerite, as yet undetected, on the spot where he had sacrificed two lives in her cause.

"It is so slippery here!" said the maiden. Sir Roland instantly caught her up in his arms, and ran forward with his burden. After a few steps, however, he stumbled over the corse of the second sentinel, and both came to the ground.

"Holy God! what is this?" cried Marguerite.

"Silence!—it is nothing!" He swung her over the cliff, and after a whispered entreaty to remain silent and motionless, seized the dead body, and raised it up perpendicularly against the rock, as it might have stood when living. He had scarcely time to conceal himself among some fern behind the legs, when the patrol guard arrived, with breathless speed, within a few yards of the spot, and, halting when they saw their comrade at his post, shouted sternly and hastily the challenge—

"Hallo, Pierre! What cheer? Has any one passed?"

"No one!" replied a gruff and husky voice—"all's well!" The patrol passed on—all but one man. This was the sentinel who came to relieve Pierre; and

he stood for some moments looking after his comrades as they darted along towards the next post.

"Well, for certain," said he—"I say, Pierre, mind my words!—for certain the night has something in it out of the common; and I wish we may all find ourselves well in the morning. First, there was working at our trade—and it matters not what the trade is—on a Good Friday; and then came the feminine—a most pestilent animal in a cloister of men, and who never appears without breeding mischief; and now this unearthly yelling, as if the great fiend himself had been attracted by the presence of a new Eve. But I say, Pierre, you may as well be off, and warm your limbs at the guard-room fire; for, by the blessed mass! your voice sounded just now as if it came from the grave. Here," continued he, approaching, "here is a mouthful of the true stuff, out of my own flask, just to keep body and soul together;" and he raised his lantern to the face of his comrade.

"'All's well,' quotha!" said he. "By the holy Saint Barnabas, it is a pretty saying to come from a mouth like that! Open thy monumental lips, old lad, and receive the stream of life!—but never stare at me in that fashion, with eyes that look like a couple of gooseberries! Come, wilt not drink? Then jog, with a murrion on thee! O Christ, what is this! Speak, if thou bee'st a living man—cry 'all's well!' again, if thou croak it like a toad! Pierre!"—and his teeth chattered audibly in his head, as the conviction gathered upon his mind that he was addressing a dead man. He lowered his lantern, and saw a line of

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R.A.

Engraved by R. Wallis

congealed blood upon the breast; at the sight, shaking as with an ague, he sank upon his knees, and began to stammer forth a pater noster. At that instant the corpse fell prostrate upon him. All was silent. The bold robber had fainted.

Sir Roland and his mistress pursued their flight more leisurely, but scarcely less cautiously; and by the time that it was fairly daylight, they had gained the banks of the Loire, at a considerable distance below the bridge. Here they embarked in the first trading vessel that passed; and the young knight landed his mistress in safety on his patrimonial estate near Nantes.

The above circumstances led eventually to the destruction of the robber; for the Duke Pierre de Dreux, in revenge for the insult offered to his kinswoman, as well as prompted in some measure by private ambition, led his arms against the pirate of the Loire. He took the castle by assault, after a siege in which many of the defenders were slain; and in reward for the service, the domain of Chantoceau, and that of Montfaucon, were bestowed upon him by Louis VIII.

Nor did the bravery and devotion of Sir Roland de Juigné pass without their recompense; for the duke, once his bitter enemy, became now his warmest friend; and the young knight led his lovely Marguerite to the altar, surrounded by the kinsmen of both houses.

CHAPTER VII.

NANTES.

The château of Chantoceau (in the plate, Château Hamelin,) was at one time enclosed by double walls, and defended by a ditch. There is now only a heap of ruins to be seen on the spot. The people who crowded towards it for refuge and protection, founded within a short distance a town, containing, as we are told in history, "several churches and handsome buildings." Of these there remains to-day but the priory, converted into a farm-house; and the inhabitants of a neighbouring village sow their grain upon the site of the vanished colony.

Nearly opposite is the little town of Oudon, with a very remarkable tower, which has given occasion for the speculations of numerous antiquaries. It is of an octagon shape, and rises to a considerable height, presenting a strikingly picturesque appearance when viewed from the river. Some writers ascribe its erection to the middle of the ninth century; but in the now received opinion it dates no farther back than the thirteenth. This fortress sustained a siege, both by John Lackland and Saint Louis; but it is better known as the abode of certain gentlemen-coiners, who, in the reign of Francis I., dissatisfied with the paltriness of the booty obtained by piracies on the river, adopted the

expedient of *making* money—not metaphorically, but literally.

From the moment that taxes ceased to be received, when it so suited the convenience of the taxed, in kind —which in England occurred so early as the reign of Henry I.—money became the one thing needful. The kings cheated their subjects by debasing the material; and their subjects cheated the kings, by clipping the good pieces when they found any, and imitating the bad so ingeniously, that people were often betrayed into allowing themselves to be swindled by private rather than royal coiners. The difference was, that the kings could not be prosecuted for the felony, while the people were fully exposed to all the pains and penalties of the law; and thus, in England, hundreds of obscure rascals swung upon the gibbets, while Henry VIII. transmuted, with royal impunity, a pound of silver, worth one pound, seventeen shillings, and sixpence, into seven pounds, four shillings; and James II., when in Ireland, issued fourpence worth of metal to his loving subjects, in pieces representing ten pounds sterling!

Reasoning, no doubt, upon similar facts, Jean and Julien de Malestroit, Lords of Oudon, persuaded themselves that, according to the rights of man, and the eternal fitness of things, they ought to be as much at liberty to cheat their subjects as the king was to cheat them. They accordingly manufactured money in such sums as they required it, and issued the coinage to their vassals. This was an easy way of living well; and Jean and Julien would, in all probability, have grown obese and gouty, had they not, by way of exercise, been in

the habit of sweeping the river and the highways of all superfluous commodities. The latter practice was nothing out of the way — it was, indeed, the fashion among lords of the period: but Francis I., who happened to be at Nantes, on his way from Italy, was seriously discomposed by the ratiocination of these strange coiners. He held altogether the opposite side of the argument; and, after the manner of kings, sent an armament of logicians to convince them of their error. The château of Oudon was besieged, and its owners carried to Nantes; when, the dispute being referred to the arbitrement of a court of justice, they were declared to be in the wrong, and expiated their mistake by losing their heads on the Place du Bouffay.

A little lower down, on the same side of the river, we pass a very extensive fortress, apparently still more ancient than the tower of Oudon. It is one of those creations which in France and Scotland are termed *folies*. The term signifies any thing odd and useless in architecture; and in the present case is applied to a modern imitation of an ancient edifice. There is, perhaps, no harm in us, creatures of to-day, thus launching forth the anathemas of what we call taste against so paltry a deception; but where, after all, is the real difference between the tower of Oudon and its modern rival? In a little while they will both be a heap of ruins. The former will be traced by the yet unborn antiquary to the Francs or the Romans; and the latter classed with those monuments of antiquity, whose origin is lost in the night of ages. Alas for human pride! Is our noblest edifice any thing else than a folly?

Drawn by J. M. W. Turner R.A.

Engraved by J. T. Wilkinson

The next remarkable object is the château of Clairmont, perched upon a steep which dominates for a considerable distance the course of the Loire. The description will be found opposite this page; and we dare not add a word to it. The castle is supposed to have been built in the fourteenth century, but very little is known on the subject. The styles of the proprietors in the year 1510, and under Louis XIV., are known; but there is not a single association either of history or romance recalled by its name. This is the more remarkable, as the edifice stands on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the whole country; being built on a mass of rock, which looks like the advanced guard of the magnificent Côteaux de Mauves.

A portion of the superb panorama presented by the banks of the river known under this name, is given in the annexed view. The village of Mauve itself, and that of Cellier, form a part of the picture; but Seilleraie is invisible from the river. The last is situated on the great road to Nantes, and near it is the château interesting to many persons as the abode of Madame de Sevigné. "I saw her apartment," writes a French author, "such as it was in her own time, together with her portrait as the huntress Diana, and an autograph letter, bearing all the character of originality peculiar to this celebrated woman. A gallery of pictures is still shewn to amateurs—or rather, of portraits; among which are observed those of the Lebruns, the Mignards, and the Jouvenets. The chapel is remarkable for its dome, ornamented with paintings in fresco.

The gardens of the château, planted by Lenotre, its vast park, and beautiful sheets of water, contribute, with its situation near the right bank of the Loire, to render it a delightful residence, still more embellished by the hereditary hospitality of its owners."

"Why," exclaims the same writer, "are not all our châteaux thus inhabited? Why are they, in some cases, rendered inaccessible by the presence of the proprietors, and in others, the most numerous, abandoned to the care of a concierge, who in turn abandons them to the ravages of time? Formerly the châteaux were the ornaments of France. Are those which have been spared by the revolution destined to crumble away through carelessness?"

Passing the village of Barbechet and the bourg of Chapelle-basse-Mer, we arrive at Loroux-Bottereau, an ancient town of five thousand inhabitants. This place dates from the eighth century; and the proof of its antiquity is what we moderns would call a romance.

Saint Felix, the famous bishop of Nantes, had a niece, young, beautiful, and so forth; and the niece had a suitor, whose name, we regret to say, was Pappolen. The young girl, however, loved the young man, in spite of his name; and every thing being suitable in the rank and riches of the parties, their marriage was agreed upon, with the full consent of both families. In the midst of the preparations arrives an order from the holy bishop for his niece to become a nun! The friends are perplexed; the lovers are in despair; and every thing is at sixes and sevens.

"Let us fly!" said Pappolen—"it is better to keep old oaths than take on new ones."

"You are in the right," replied the maiden; "I am unworthy to become the bride of Heaven, and would fain eschew the sin of presumption. Besides, if you *do* run away with me, it is no fault of mine."

They fled to Loroux-Bottereau, and were once again about to be married; when suddenly the emissaries of the bishop pounced upon the bride even at the altar, and carried her off to the abbey of Basas. It is impossible to say what were her hopes or fears, her resistance, her despair: but finally she took the veil. She became a nun—all was over. Hope itself could not peep over her convent walls; and heresy dared not raise the hood, even in imagination, which covered the features of a sister of Saint Ursula.

The romance, then, is finished? It is only begun. The bishop dies; and Pappolen, taking it into his head that this last act of kindness and propriety makes every thing smooth, flies to the convent to demand his spouse. The abbess is confounded; the nuns are in confusion; no one knows what to do, or what answer to return. The damsel is a lady of high importance—the heiress of the bishop; and the tone of the gentleman is so lofty and so peremptory, that at length they think it expedient to comply. Pappolen tears off the veil of the nun, carries her away with him, and, without the least hesitation, marries her. Then comes the tug of war. The relations, who already enjoyed in anticipation the inheritance of their cloistered sister, make a tremendous outcry. They accuse Pappolen of rape, and his wife of

sacrilege, and demand the dissolution of the marriage. The law and the prophets are both against the lovers; and any one but Pappolen would have gone straightway and drowned himself in the Loire. In this extremity, however, our hero applied at once to the King of France, who happened luckily to be at that moment at daggers drawn with the church. The king, of course, sympathised with the lovers; he declared the marriage to be valid; and, moreover, made Pappolen governor of Nantes! Being aware that several of our stories have been reckoned apocryphal by an unbelieving world, it is necessary to assure the reader that the above are unadorned facts gathered from history.

Many parts of the canton of Loroux-Bottereaux are filled with ancient tombs; bones are turned up with every spadeful of earth; and the husbandmen make their livelihood, like sextons, by digging in graves. It is conjectured, from the etymology of the word Loroux, that the town was formerly one of those places set apart for lepers; and if this be correct, the origin of the bones may be conjectured which lie so thickly beneath the soil. The remains of a château of the middle ages are still visible near the house; and in a garden, at the foot of its mouldering wall, there is a subterranean passage which has never been explored.

The scenery of the river already softens down, as we approach one of the great congregations of the human kind. At the bourg of Thouaré, where we are not tempted to pause, fine meadows and cultivated fields sweep swellingly away from the water's edge; and at Doulon every thing begins to speak of the neighbourhood

of a city. By and by, a cloud appears resting upon the earth in the distance; and this is speedily seen to be overtopped by the tower of a cathedral, and a château as heavy and massive as that of Angers. On the left stretches out the district of Saint Sébastien, studded with country houses; and presently we find ourselves voyaging almost in the track of the bark which was wont to approach the holy temple with an enormous wax taper instead of a mast.

Nantes, the chef lieu of the department of the Loire Inférieure, stands upon the right bank of the Loire, at the confluence of the Erdre and Sèvre, twelve leagues from the sea, and twenty-two leagues from Angers by the Paris road. It is a great and important city; but we could discover very few of the handsome streets and squares of which French travellers boast. Some of the streets, however, are exceedingly interesting from their antique appearance; and one in particular, occupied exclusively by dealers in cloth, resembles a dark grotto. The houses, built chiefly of wood, and in the most irregular of all possible forms, lean over towards each other till they nearly meet in a pointed arch at the top; while the warehouses below resemble a series of caverns, into which no beam of daylight was ever able to penetrate.

The day being Sunday when we arrived, we had an opportunity of seeing the population in their gayest attire, and were particularly struck with the profusion of gold or gilded ornaments worn by the women even of the poorer classes. The young girls especially wore enormous ear-rings, set with stones that looked just as

well as rubies and sapphires. Great golden crosses dangled from their necks; and a small key, suspended from the waist, indicated either that they actually possessed a watch, or would be thought to do so. The doubt was suggested to our mind by the fact that most of their mammas really sported this proud ornament. The wearers appeared to belong to the same class who in London may be seen going "a-pleasuring" with a large baby in one arm, and a basket of bread and cheese, or cold veal-pie, in the other; while the husband trudges after, dragging four or five "pledges" at his heels in a little coach. These pleasurers go a step farther than is required in Scripture, earning their enjoyments, as well as their necessaries, by the sweat of their brow.

Some of the women wore a kerchief-turban of the gaudiest colours that could be selected; some a lofty pointed cap of plain muslin; and some a head-dress, which should also, we presume, be called a cap, laced and ribanded in all manner of zig-zags. The gown, in occasional instances, was an inch or two shorter than the petticoat; while neither reached beyond the middle of the leg: but the damsels so attired belonged, in all probability, to some other district, for, in general, the Nantaises are dressed with a decorum bordering upon prudery. This praise, however, if it be a praise, does not extend to their fashion of riding, which runs counter to all our notions of feminine propriety. On horseback, the two sexes have only one attitude between them; and you may see the farmer and his farmeress jogging to market, both astride on their respective steeds.

On entering a great city, a stranger usually makes it his first business to visit the booksellers' shops, in search of some descriptive guide which may assist him in exploring. In France, however, the affair is very frequently both a tedious and unprofitable one. If you go into a respectable-looking shop, and ask for a book published in the town, you are in all probability told by the librarian that, not being himself the publisher, he does not keep it. If he has the complaisance to give you the proper address, after inquiring your way to the other end of the town, you learn that the book is out of print. A single copy, however, remains—but this is in sheets; and it is vain to say that you will gladly take it even in that state, for, being mixed with the other stock of the concern, it cannot be found for some days. In one department it will be waste of time to look for a book referring to the history or topography of another. The very existence of such a work is doubted, if not denied. It would, of course, be unfair to assert that this holds good every where; but we know that it applies to the greater number of the French towns which we have ourselves visited.

The château, as being the most remarkable building in the town — and the nearest, besides, to where we happened to lodge — demands our first attention. This was the ancient residence of the Dukes of Brittany; where Henri IV. promulgated the famous Edict of Nantes, and at the sight of whose gigantic towers, the same monarch cried out — comparing it mentally, no doubt, with the humble abode of his ancestors of Navarre — "Ventre-saint-gris! les Ducs de Bretagne

n'étaient pas de petits compagnons!" It is built on the banks of the Loire, and is the principal object which attracts the attention of the traveller who arrives from the centre of the kingdom, and who disembarks almost under its walls.

The château is the sole remains of the old fortifications of the city. Even previous, however, to its construction, the defences of the place must have been of considerable strength; the Huns, in the year 453, having remained sixty days before its walls, from which they were only driven by the appearance of a seemingly unearthly procession issuing at midnight from the church of Saints Donatien-et-Rogatien. The château was built in the year 930, and after various fortunes, took fire in 1670, and was partly consumed. The portion destroyed, however, was re-constructed in the modern taste, and now serves for the residence of the governor. In 1800, one of the towers, which contained a large quantity of gunpowder, blew itself up of its own accord — for nobody could otherwise account for the accident. The huge building serves at present for an arsenal, which prevented us from inspecting the interior. It was formerly surrounded by ditches — which, indeed, still remain on the townward side, although their beds are laid out into little kitchen gardens: next to the river, a handsome quay occupies the place of the defences of war.

The other fortifications are the Bouffay and the Tour de Pirmil. The former served originally as the habitation of the Dukes of Brittany and the Counts of Nantes, and was built about the close of the tenth

century. It is now a palace of justice and a prison. The Tour de Pirmil is a ruin of the fifteenth century.

The first church of Nantes was raised by Ennius, in the fourth century, over the ashes of the martyred Saints Donatien and Rogatien. The exact spot, however, is unknown, and the church of Saint Peter, which serves for the cathedral, is reckoned the principal temple in the town. The date of this building goes back to the year 555, when it was constructed, with great magnificence, by the same Saint Felix who plays so disreputable a part in a preceding page. In the middle of the fifteenth century, however, it was almost entirely rebuilt, and assumed the appearance which it presents to-day. The front is composed of two square towers, one hundred and seventy feet high, and loaded with Gothic ornaments. The interior vault is handsome, and of a very hardy construction, the nave being one hundred and twelve feet in elevation.

Near the entrance to the sacristy, is the magnificent tomb of Francis II., which contained his body and those of his two wives, with the heart of the Duchess Anne, enclosed in a heart of gold, inscribed as follows:

" EN : CE : PETIT : VAISSEAV :
DE : FIN : OR : PVR : ET : MVNDE :
REPOSE : VNG : PLVS : GRAND : CVEVR :
QVE : ONQVE : DAME : EVT : AV : MVNDE :
ANNE : FVT : LE : NOM : DELLE :
EN : FRANCE : DEVX : FOIS : ROINE :
DVCHESSE : DES : BRETONS :
ROYALE : ET : SOVVERAINE :"

The other churches of Nantes are not remarkable.

The cours of Saint Pierre and Saint André form in their union a magnificent promenade. They extend between the Erdre and the Loire, terminating in the latter direction near the walls of the château. They are divided by a square, with a column and statue — which, however, looks like the grand centre-piece of the whole — and are planted with two alleys of elms and some linden trees. At the end next the Erdre are the statues of Duguesclin and Olivier de Clisson; and near the Loire, those of Anne of Brittany and Arthur III. From the latter point is taken the annexed view, which exhibits, in front, the imposing mass of the château, and to the left the masts of some vessels, which indicate the proximity of the river.

With the exception of the Place Royale, and the Place Graslin, the squares, amounting to thirty-three, are not worth the room which their names would occupy.

The ancient name of Nantes was Condivicnum, signifying, in Celtic etymology, the confluence of several rivers. It was the capital of the Nannetes, who eventually gave their own name to their metropolis, just as Lutecia, the capital of the Parisians, became Paris, and Condate, the capital of the Rhedones, Rennes. Nantes, according to some historians, was founded by Namnes, three hundred years after the deluge; but the truth is, the Nannetes appear to have been a people of comparatively little enterprise; and till the arrival of the Normans, in 834, led on by one of the Counts of Nantes, whom his subjects had discarded, the city is little mentioned in history. On this occasion, the

besieged retired to the cathedral, with their bishop Gohart, and were almost all massacred.

From this period the ravages of the Normans — who sometimes remained masters of the district for many years — were continued with little intermission till 931, when they sustained a total defeat by Alain-Barbe-Torte, some say in the meadows of Mauves, and others in the parish of Saint-Aignan. When Alain proceeded in triumph to the city, which had been in possession of the northern barbarians upwards of twenty years, he found the cathedral surrounded with thorns and brambles; through which he was obliged to cut his way with his sword, before he could enter to return thanks for the victory. Twenty-three years after, Nantes was besieged and taken, for the last time, by the Normans.

The famous Edict of Nantes on the state of the reformed church was promulgated by Henri IV., at the château; but the city ought to be still more celebrated for a deed which it left undone. The massacre of Saint Bartholomew did *not* take place here. In vain the scoundrel governor, who was the Duke of Montpensier, addressed a letter to the authorities, commanding them to cut the throat of every Protestant, male or female, found in the city on the fatal day. The mayor, Le Loup Dubreil, indignantly refused obedience: he was supported by his colleagues; and in Nantes that day passed over unstained, which to this hour casts a shade of horror upon the French name.

The port of Nantes may be said to be Paimbœuf, a little town on the left bank of the Loire, eight leagues

distant from the former, and near the sea. Here vessels of large tonnage are discharged, and the cargoes transported to Nantes in flat-bottomed barges of sixty, and sometimes even a hundred tons. A little lower down, on the opposite side of the river, is Donges; near which, on the banks of the Loire, is a singular stone, weighing at least twenty thousand pounds. No one knows any thing about the origin or nature of this monument, which was formerly surmounted by a cross. At a little distance, a mount called the Butte de Cesme rises among the marshy lands of this district, and affords a superb view from its summit, embracing six towns and twenty-six parishes. At the base are the remains of a camp supposed to be Roman, and near them a number of Druidical stones.

The towns and villages on either bank are chiefly inhabited by mariners, and especially by pilots, who, although useful in most rivers, are altogether indispensable in the Loire, the navigation of which is rendered difficult and dangerous by the sand-banks, that threaten, in the course of another generation, to render this fine river altogether useless for the purposes of commerce.

The Loire, in Latin *Liger*, takes its source at Mont-Gerbier-le-Joux, in the department of Ardeche, in Languedoc; and from thence it wanders a course of two hundred and twenty leagues, till it falls into the ocean. During this journey it swallows up one hundred and twelve rivers, and confers its name upon six departments of France—the Haute-Loire, the Saône-et-Loire, the Loire, the Indre-et-Loire, the Maine-et-Loire, and

the Loire-Inférieure. At Roanne, in the department of the Loire, it first becomes navigable for boats; and at Briare, in that of the Loiret, it communicates, by means of a canal, with the Seine. Indeed, in the usual meaning of the word, it can hardly be called navigable till it reaches the latter place; but even from this point its navigation extends one hundred and seventy-four leagues.

The Loire, which has been reckoned one of the principal rivers of France, threatens to become one of the meanest, acted upon by some strange principle of destruction that is mingled with its very being. The islands, which form so frequent and picturesque an object in its scenery, are in most cases nothing else than sand-banks; and the same kind of formations, which we see to-day in their earlier phenomena, rising near or above the surface, interrupt the stream so much, and introduce so many different currents, as frequently to baffle the skill of the navigator. Thus the river, overflowing the banks, in consequence of the continual rising of its bed, loses in depth what it gains in breadth; and would appear to the unobservant spectator to be a much more important stream than it really is.

There is historical evidence to prove, that nineteen hundred years ago the tide rose to the country of the Andegaves, or into Anjou, where Brutus, by order of Cæsar, built a fleet for the purpose of combatting the Veneti, who had pushed their conquests even to the Loire. It is known, also, that only one hundred years ago the tide mounted to Ancenis; while now it is scarcely

felt at Mauves. In the island of Gloriette, a stratum of shells is found sixty feet below the surface of the earth; and the cellars of the houses, which were built formerly, as at present, beyond the reach of spring-tides, are now, on such occasions, totally submerged. In 1825, a chapel was excavated, the vault of which was four feet under the surface of the street. It was ascertained that this was a chapel of the Knights Templars, which had been built in the thirteenth century; and the calculation was made at the time, that the bed of the Loire must have risen from forty to fifty feet between the years 1200 and 1830. As the river approaches the sea, the sand-banks, as we have seen, are numerous and dangerous. To these it is owing that vessels of large burden must be discharged at Paimbœuf; and perhaps the time is not very far distant when Nantes itself may become, to all intents and purposes, an inland city.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that in a great commercial city like Nantes the above facts have excited universal attention; and that the ingenious are constantly devising new plans to remedy an evil already so great, or avert a threatened ruin so overwhelming. Among these, the most popular are the project of a series of lateral canals, and that of a line of dikes confining the stream to a narrower channel. It is held by the adherents of the latter plan, that the greater energy imparted to the waters would of itself clear away the sand and deepen the river; but, for our part, we would suggest that the Loire already is barely navigable, to any profitable purpose, against the stream, and that the

additional impetuosity which would sweep away sand-banks would also add a month to the voyage from Nantes to Orleans. In 1825, however, the scheme was tried, to a certain extent, between Chouzé and Candes, and is said to have answered the purpose so far as it went; although nothing certain can be deduced from an essay which was supported by only a fourth part of the funds calculated upon by the administrators.

The river produces in abundance salmon, lamprey, shad, carp, bream, and pike. Eels are also plentiful; and their spawn, while ascending the river from the sea in early spring, are caught in vast quantities, like white bait in England, and esteemed a great delicacy.

The lake of Grand-Lieu being only three leagues to the south of Nantes, perhaps the reader will accompany us there before we proceed on our homeward route, in an opposite direction from the Loire. This lake is celebrated, in the first place, for the victory of Alain Barbe-Torte over the Normans in the year 936, popularly supposed to have been obtained upon its banks. The story is, that the Bretons, wearied, but unconquered, and thirsty with heat and loss of blood, retired to the fountain of Faux-Choux to drink, where they lay down to rest for some hours. The Normans, in the meantime, remained where they were; and from this circumstance the affair must be considered to have been as yet a drawn battle. Refreshed, at length, by the waters of the well—which is held in veneration to this day—Alain led on his troops again to the conflict; and gained so signal a victory, that the country was delivered for nearly twenty years from the

visitations of those desperate and deadly pirates of the north, whose descendants are now seated peaceably beside the Britons in an adjacent province, and are by far the more quiet and respectable people of the two. Beside the château of Saint-Aignan, a little town near which the battle is said to have been fought, there are the remains of entrenchments said to have been the camp of the Normans.

The lake of Grand-Lieu, however, (on the banks of which, next to Nantes, Saint-Aignan is situated,) is famed for something else.

There is a city called Herbauges, or Herbadilla, mentioned by the old Nantais writers as forming part of the bishopric of Nantes; and Albert le Grand informs us, that this city was founded soon after the conquest of Gaul by the Romans, and about the time when Cæsar turned his arms against the Veneti. The Nannetes, it seems, whose principal town was at that time on the south of the Loire, towards Pont-Rousseau and Rezé, assisted their neighbours against the powerful strangers; and Cæsar, in return, attacked them in their capital, which he carried by assault and razed to the ground. The inhabitants took refuge in the marshes a few leagues distant, where, from the nature of the ground, the Romans were unable to follow; and where, eventually, the former built a city, which they called Herbadilla.

Where is the famous Herbadilla to-day—the refuge of a people powerful enough to oppose the arms of Cæsar? Fifteen thousand acres of deep water stagnate on the place indicated by old writers as its site,

not a vestige of it remains, save some household utensils and pieces of carved wood that are occasionally disgorged by the fatal tide; not a sound is audible of all the manifold and mighty voices that fill the atmosphere of a city — not a sound, save the ringing of its buried bells, that are still heard on a Christmas eve by the peasant who suffers himself to be caught in the shadows of twilight near the lonely lake.

The following is the story of its submersion, as related in the legend of Saint Martin of Vertou.

"The city of Herbadilla was still the abode of pagans in the sixth century, and gave itself up to every kind of wickedness. Saint Martin, being sent there to preach repentance to the infidels, was received into the house of a certain man called Romain, who treated him with great hospitality. When he attempted, however, to give out the word of God in the town, the inhabitants turned a deaf ear to his discourse — they even insulted and abused him, and finally thrust him forth from among them.

"Then he declared to his hosts that the measure of wickedness was full, and that the great city was about to suffer for its crimes. He invited them to follow him, which they did, wondering. Scarcely had they journeyed a league, when they heard a frightful noise behind them. The earth trembled; the dwellings of sin disappeared from its surface; and the waters of a deep, still lake arose in its place."

This picture resembles so closely the famous one in Scripture, that we must needs suspect its originality; but when the legend writer goes on to say that the wife

of Romain, disobeying the orders of the saint, turned round to see what had become of the houses of her family and people, and was changed into a stone, we at once identify her with the spouse of the generous and hospitable Lot, who, as they fled from the burning cities of the plain, "looked back from behind her, and became a pillar of salt."

M. Huet, nevertheless, in his "Statistiques du département de la Loire Inférieure," adopts the opinion that Herbadilla was really engulfed; but transfers the date of the event from the sixth century, the era of Saint Martin, to the eighth or ninth. Its occurrence at the former epoch would undoubtedly have attracted the attention of Gregory of Tours and Fortunatus, and have been mentioned by them; whereas, at the latter, the ignorance which prevailed in Europe was so profound, that events of the most stupendous magnitude passed unchronicled or unobserved.

So early as the year 1459, it was proposed, in the council of the Duke Francis II., to drain the lake of Grand-Lieu, and bring the lands lying waste at the bottom under cultivation. There were even commissioners appointed to inquire into the practicability of the project; but in the agitations arising from the wars which followed, it was laid aside and forgotten. In 1506, there was some question of turning the lake into a basin for the royal marine, by means of a contemplated canal from Bourgneuf; but the inquirers found the plan impracticable. In 1559, Henri II. issued orders to drain the lake, which were never executed; and, in 1572, Charles IX. renewed them, producing

only an ineffectual attempt. In 1705, the question was still agitated; and M. Ogée, the author of the Breton Dictionary, thinks the execution possible, and that the advantages to be derived would more than compensate for the expense.

While talking of the olden time, it may not be thought amiss if we remark that the cathedral of Nantes is built upon the ruins of a druidical temple, consecrated to a god called Boulianus, Boul-Janus, or Voldanus, adored in Armorican Gaul, whose symbolical representations appear to exhibit that knowledge of natural religion which has so often made philosophers deny the necessity for a supernatural revelation.

The Armoricans flocked to Nantes three times in the year to pray in the temple of Boul-Janus—or, according to etymology, Janus, ruler of the globe. This deity was represented with three heads enclosed in a triangle, with the Greek letters A.N.Ω., which appear to signify the beginning, the middle, and the end. The globe was under his feet; and he darted thunder with his right hand, and directed the clouds with his left. One foot was on the land, and the other on the sea. The temple was situated in the country of the Nannetes; it was served by twelve priests, chosen by the people from the body of the Druids. This temple, according to the same authority, an ancient Latin manuscript, cited by Albert le Grand, was destroyed under the empire of Constantine the Great, while Eumelius occupied the see of Nantes, and Sextus Probus was the Roman governor of the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEAD RIVER.

We must now leave the Loire behind, and pursue our wanderings through the heart of Brittany. On the west, or left hand, is the territory of Vannes, the country of the ancient Veneti, supposed by Strabo to be the ancestors of the Venetians; and extending to the east lies Anjou, which we have already traversed. Our line of march is between the two; being directed towards the capital of the Rhedones, vulgarly called Rennes.

If the reader fancies, however, that we shall put ourselves into a diligence, or a post-chaise, and make for the proposed object by the nearest route, he does not know us. The river Erdre, lying—not running—at some little distance on the east, seduces us, without much trouble, from the high road; and, contented with the idea that we are advancing towards Rennes, we deposit our person in the stern of a little boat, without calculating very minutely the rate or angle of our progress.

This river is worth seeing, on more accounts than one. There is an air of originality about it which is very remarkable — and yet it is any thing but original, in the proper sense of the word. Its ancient bed was filled up by the same Pierre de Dreux who subdued, as we have seen, the famous Pirate of the Loire; and the

chaussée of Barbin — constructed, it is supposed, by the same Saint Felix who intromitted so improperly with the loves of his niece and Monsieur Pappolen — by retaining the waters, converts it from an insignificant stream into a magnificent river.

The Erdre resembles more a basin of the Loire than a river falling into it. Its motion is invisible, its current imperceptible. You glide in a canoe-like boat over its waters as calm as death, shut in by melancholy banks that look like the sides of a grave. The very mariners are silent, and their oars dip into the heavy element, as if they feared to disturb it. You fancy yourself, at length, on some lake over which you are transported by the mute ministers of enchantment, and look forward with curiosity to the end of your voyage, which seems to be near at hand. If in the meantime a trout should leap out of the water to look at you as you pass, you are carried instantly to the Arabian Nights and the Ebony Islands, and remember, with a pleasing shiver, the lady stepping out of the kitchen-wall, and tapping the fish in the frying-pan with her magic rod, as she inquired — "Fish, fish, are you in your duty?" — to which the fish answered and said, with equal mystery, "If you are in your duty, we are in our duty; if you reckon, we reckon; if you fly, we overcome, and are content."

On reaching the end of the lake, however, and nearing the bank, just as you are preparing to disembark, the canoe shoots round the corner, and you find another lake before you, of nearly the same form, and precisely the same character. You are reminded

of the changes of a pantomime, though this one is much more cleverly performed. Before it took place, the river around you looked like a plain of black marble, polished like a mirror, in which the stirless trees on the banks were reflected with magical precision. But at the instant of the shifting of the scene you are smitten — and the occurrence is not a rare one — by a blast of wind, which stops your breath, and almost upsets your frail bark. A sail would have been fatal. The blast whitens the black river where it passes, and some faint surges rise as if unwillingly. But in another moment the foam disappears; the waters relapse into their enchanted slumber; and all is calm, and black, and mute, and lifeless as before.

On the opposite bank, in the meantime, the picture is different. It is steeped in sunshine, and radiant with the thousand hues of summer; the trees, although still, are full of life, and white villas gleam between the groves; you fancy you hear the singing of birds. O, that opposite bank — that emblem of futurity! — it is always bright, always beautiful! But what idiots are they from whom the exclamation comes in a tone of melancholy or discontent! What is the present? Nothing! It is gone before we can form the idea of its existence. Even in the enlarged sense of the term, it is only a dream of the future. Sleep, in which we consume at least a third part of our life, has nothing to do with the present — it is divided between the future and the past; while our waking existence is made up almost entirely of anticipations and regrets. But how can we enjoy this future, which is always to come,

and therefore never ours? We enjoy it at this moment — at this moment it is ours. We come beggars into life, and are always living therefore in advance. The heirs of eternity, we draw upon the rich inheritance for support in our minority — till, at length, that period is passed; the old executer Death gives the word, we enter upon full possession, the past is annihilated, the future becomes the present, imagination is changed into reality, and hope into enjoyment.

At the very first setting out for the chaussée of Barbin, the Erdre presents the appearance of a lake. It is here bordered on either side by country houses, built on sloping eminences; and although the voyager is struck with the strangely black appearance of the river, an air of cheerfulness is conferred upon the scene by these constructions and their concomitants. At the first turning of the river, a circular wall presents itself upon the right, which encloses an image of the Virgin, the principal deity of the Catholics, and more especially the patroness of those whose bread is cast upon the waters. Sometimes an old man may be seen to cross his breast in token of reverence as he passes; but it is a rare thing with one of this unbelieving sex. The women, however, almost always make the holy sign; their lips move; occasionally they sink upon their knees, and bend their head. In the curve of a creek close by is the Houssinière, an antique-looking building, set down in a very romantic situation, and appropriated to the dignified leisure of the prefects of the department.

On the other side of the river is a rock without anything remarkable in its appearance, although the view

from the top is fine. It is called, or rather miscalled, the Rocher d'Enfer. Towards the north of the Houssinière the little river Cens falls into the Erdre, and forms a bay, the surface of which is covered with aquatic plants, which in summer having scarcely water enough to sustain them, exhale their complaints in the form of miasma. Beyond the bay, on the left bank of the river, are the ruins of a château, surrounded by lofty trees.

Let us now borrow for an instant the pen of a native of Nantes, whose book is frequently an agreeable companion.*

"The imagination," says he, "having nothing to excite it, we sink into a reverie made up more of sensations than ideas. Our impressions are all of a calm and even melancholy nature, which is in keeping with the silence of those lovely banks, and with the shadows that fall far over the waters, and cover the whole passage as with a veil. The little noise which is heard in the midst of what may be termed the slumber of nature, is not sufficient to distract. It is composed of the sound of the wind dying among the rushes, the surge rising heavy and unbroken upon the rock, and the measured dash of some distant oar. * * * All is silence and repose in this peaceful scene, where even the voiceful element of water is mute.

"We never see on these shores the ridges of sand which, in almost all other rivers, are the debatable

* Voyage dans le département de la Loire Inférieure, par M. E. Richer.

lines between the empire of the water and that of vegetation. The green turf approaches with confidence to the very edge of the borders, as if aware that these are never undermined by the rebellions of the waves which it is their province to confine. At the same time, if the geologist will remark the inclination of the two banks, and the interval between them, his thoughts will be carried back to a period earlier than history, in which the whole basin was filled by the water which now only covers its bottom. He will find traces of rapid emotion written in ineffaceable characters; and instead of those gentle inflexions of the soil which now follow the course of the stream, a series of lofty banks, opening and shutting with a stern abruptness. Peace in the meantime reigns in those regions where is seen the image of by-gone turbulence. The contrast between the immobility of the waters and the remote banks that enclose them is striking. It seems in some places as if a lake slept tranquilly in the heretofore bed of a torrent."

The bay of La Verrière, beyond the Cens, exhibits, in its tracts of mud, and shallow and stagnant waters, a striking picture of the fertility of nature. These are covered with vegetation, and present the botanist with a remarkable variety of curious plants. Near it, an ancient ruin, concealed among the thickets, and scarcely distinguishable from the rocks on which it is raised, recalls to our memory a character remarkable for the same rank growth, and which, although now forgotten — or buried in poetry and fable — excited at one time the interest of all inquirers into the mysteries of the

human mind. These ruins are all that remain of the abode of Gilles de Retz, the veritable *Blue Beard*, the hero of the celebrated tale of Perrault. He was lord also, no doubt, of Ingrande, Chantocé, Machecou, Bourgneuf, Pornic, Princé, and many other places, each of which claimed the distinction of having been the principal theatre of his crimes; and it may be supposed, therefore, that we owe some explanation to the reader of our reasons for giving the preference to La Verrière, and laying the horrid scene on the banks of the Dead River. If he will only consider, however, how near we are to the close of our volume—and, in fact, that we are by no means sure of having a next chapter wherein to give the story promised at Chantocé, he will perhaps look over the informality. All we can do at this moment is to offer him a very slight historical account of the Maréchal Gilles de Retz, who flourished (if the Upas tree can be said to flourish) in the reign of Jean V., Duke of Brittany, in the early part of the fifteenth century.

Born of one of the most illustrious houses of Brittany, he found himself an orphan at twenty years of age, and the possessor of enormous wealth. He was, of course, immediately surrounded by parasites, who, by flattering the weaknesses and cherishing the evil passions of his nature, and introducing new ones, contrived to turn both his follies and crimes to their own advantage. He was a man of extraordinary bravery; and, while yet in his youth, acquired by his services in war the honorable title of marshal. This, however, although high enough for his ambition, did not suffice for

his vanity. He would be known to the world, not only as a brave soldier, but as a man of illustrious birth, immense fortune, and boundless generosity. The world, he knew, can only distinguish characters by their outward manifestations; and he, therefore, assumed a state befitting the exalted personage whom he imagined himself to be.

When he went abroad, he was followed, in marching order, by two hundred men of his house, well mounted and magnificently equipped; and on returning to the château, he was joined, at some distance from the house, by his almoner, attended by a dean, a chanter, two archdeacons, four vicars, a schoolmaster, twelve chaplains, and eight choristers, each handsomely mounted, and followed, like his body guard, by valets. The clothing of this ecclesiastical company was splendid in the extreme, consisting of scarlet robes trimmed with precious furs. In religious pomp, in fact, he was scarcely surpassed by the wealthiest churches. His travelling chapel dazzled every eye by the numbers it displayed of crosses, chandeliers, censers, vases of gold and silver, and other ornaments. The procession was closed by six organs, each carried by six men. All this state, however—which might have well satisfied a monarch—was vanity and vexation of spirit to Gilles de Retz, on account of one little desideratum. He wished that the priests of his chapel should have the privilege of wearing a bishop's mitre! —and this, in spite of his entreaties, his ambassadors, and his gifts, the Pope had the insolence to refuse.

The château in which he deigned to reside emulated

the splendour of one of those fairy fabrics which cost a poor author only a page or two of words. The roofs were painted in imitation of azure skies sprinkled with stars; the gilded cornices were carved so as to resemble foliage; and the walls were tapestried with cloth of gold, which cost six hundred francs the ell.

Often, however, he forsook this palace of the genii, in order to dazzle the wondering citizens. Accompanied by a train of flatterers, dancing and singing boys, musicians, and stage-players, he betook himself to some great town, where he not only treated the people to gratis representations of mysteries — the only sort of drama then known — but distributed refreshments to all who were polite enough to look on.

It is hardly necessary to say, that a very few years were sufficient to exhaust a fortune subject to such demands, and pillaged at the same time by the owner's friends. Gilles was by no means alarmed at this consummation. His estates were so numerous that he could hardly repeat their names without book; and he looked upon them as possessing the same kind of inexhaustibility which he had attributed to his vanished millions.* He began to sell. First went one lordship, and then another; till at last his relations, taking the alarm, petitioned the king to forbid the farther alienation of the family property; which was done in due form, and the proclamation published by sound of trumpet.

This was a blow which almost upset the brain of

* French money, of course, supposed.

Gilles de Retz, enfeebled by continual debauchery. Was he to sink at once into the station of a private individual, and drag through an ignominious life, the remembrance of his past glories converted into present shame? Money, it seemed, was the one thing needful —this bauble which he was accustomed to play with and throw away. Were there not other ways of obtaining it than by the sale of estates? Could it not be dragged from the mine or the deep by other methods than the employment of capital and the working of machinery? His thoughts darted themselves into every hole and corner of human and superhuman speculation, and he gave to things possible and impossible the same eager and devout attention. The following is the result, as it is related by a Breton historian.

"God not having listened to the impious desires of the marshal, this warrior resolved to obtain, by other ways, the power and riches of which he was ambitious. He had heard that there existed on the earth men who, for certain considerations, and by means of great intrepidity, had been able to overstep the bounds of the known world, and to tear away the veil which separates finite beings from forms of incorporeal air; and that the spirits subjected to their power were compelled to minister to their smallest wishes. On the instant his emissaries set out to traverse Italy and Germany, to penetrate into distant solitudes, and the depths of primeval forests, and to sound the gloomy caverns, where report had placed the servants of the Prince of Darkness. Soon malefactors, rogues, and vagabonds of all orders formed the court of Gilles de Retz. He

saw apparitions, he heard voices; sounds of terrible import were muttered from the bosom of the earth; and in a little while the subterranean vaults of the château resounded to the cries of his victims.

"The most odious ideas that ever entered into the depraved brain of the alchymist were put into practice, to effect the transmutation of metals, and obtain that philosopher's stone, which was to confer on them riches and immortality. Mysterious furnaces were burning night and day; but the real treasures which disappeared in them were not sufficient to satisfy the cupidity of the adepts by whom he was surrounded. They presented to him at length an Indian sage, who, as they informed him, had travelled over the whole earth, and from whom nature had been unable to preserve a single secret.

"An imposing and severe countenance, eyes that dazzled those on whom they shone, and a beard as white as snow, distinguished the man of the east; while his simple, but elegant manners announced that he had lived habitually with the great ones of the earth. Nothing appeared new or strange to him—no name, no person, no event. He was almost always buried in profound silence; but when he did condescend to speak, his discourse was of things so extrarordinary, so wonderful, or so terrible, and all occurring in his own presence, that Gilles de Retz became fascinated while he listened, and delivered himself up, with all the remains of his fortune, to this remarkable stranger.

"It was then that the dungeons of his château echoed with groans, and were watered with tears. It

became necessary to call up the prince of the fallen angels, the contemner of God, the devil, Satan himself; and the only cuirass which could preserve the invoker from the first effects of his indignation must be cemented with human blood. Nay, the marshal himself must plunge the poniard into the heart of his victim, and count the quick convulsions that preceded and accompanied the instant of death.

" At a short distance from the château there was a forest as ancient as the world; in the centre of which a little spring, bursting from a rock, was absorbed and disappeared in the ground. A thousand fearful tales were told of this solitary spot; phantoms glided shrieking through the trees; and if any of the neighbours, attracted either by pity or curiosity, approached the unhallowed precincts, they were never more seen. Their bodies, it was supposed, were buried round the spring. It was here that the Indian proposed to subdue the rebel angels, and to bring the most powerful among them under the dominion of the marshal.

" One night, at the mid-hour, the sage proceeded to this spot, armed at all points, protected by the cuirass cemented by human blood, and furnished with the seal of Gilles de Retz, who followed him alone. He first dug a grave, round which he traced various circles, and these he intermingled with strange figures, in which he deposited some odd or hideous objects. He then built an altar with the earth taken out of the grave and some flat stones that he had set carefully apart, placing upon it, when ready, the bones of the victims buried round the spring.

" A new crime was then committed. The blood of an infant flowed into the grave; and responding to its death-cries the voice of an owl was heard, which the stranger a few days before had set at liberty in the forest. Up to this moment, the theatre of the dreadful sacrifices had received no light, except from some rays of the moon darting fitfully through the foliage; but when the Indian had pronounced certain barbarous and impious words, a thick smoke appeared round the altar, and was followed by a bluish light, so brilliant that the eye could scarcely endure it. The magician then struck fiercely on a buckler, which resounded to the blow; and in the midst of a terrific noise which filled the forest, a being resembling an enormous leopard, whose horrible form was long imprinted on the imagination of the marshal, advanced slowly, with seemingly articulate roars, which the Indian explained in a low and troubled voice to his wretched employer.

" ' It is Satan,' said he: ' he accepts your homage. But, curses on my soul! I have forgotten the most important part of the incantation. He cannot speak to you! Why did I not think of this sooner?'

" ' Can we not begin again?' cried the marshal, trembling with hope and fear.

" ' Peace, in the devil's name!' whispered the Indian, appearing to listen. ' At Florence,' continued he. ' Yes, in the depth of that cellar — Do you then consent to the death of——'

" ' Just heaven!' shouted the marshal in a fury. ' May the great God confound you!—have I not already promised?' But at the holy name of the Father of

Mercies, the vision vanished, the echoes of the forest repeated a thousand wild and mournful cries, and the dazzling light expired in thick darkness.

" ' I recommended silence to you,' said the magician, after according an instant to human weakness; ' but the name which escaped from your lips has lost to you for ever the power you were on the eve of acquiring over the spirit. He said enough, however, to enable me to render you the possessor of all the treasures buried in the bosom of the earth. The talisman by means of which this must be effected is at the bottom of an urn in a tomb near Florence; and behold!' continued he, stooping and picking up a plate of gold which the marshal had not observed,—' behold the sign which will introduce me into places however deeply hidden.'

" The marshal returned to his château, placed in the hands of the Indian the whole amount he was able to raise, saw him set out on his journey to Florence, and, with a heart full of rage for having lost by his own fault the immense advantages he had expected, waited with anxiety the expiration of the year, which the impostor had marked as the period of his return."

Disappointed in his search after the philosopher's stone, and in his longings for dominion over the powers of the air, Gilles de Retz sought in marriage a means of replenishing his coffers. The dowry of his wife was soon exhausted—or her charms palled upon his senses—and she disappeared. A second supplied her place—a third—even to the seventh wife! The cry of blood at length rose to heaven; and Jean V., duke of Brittany,

determined to arrest this gigantic criminal. After some difficulty he was taken—not in his own château, which was too well defended, but by means of an ambuscade—and thrown into the dungeons of Nantes.

The Indian was next seized, who proved to be a Florentine called Prelati. He was put to the torture, and confessed every thing. Gilles himself could not stand unmoved the appearance of the rack; but, forgetting the resolution he seemed to have taken to die in silence, poured forth a declaration of his crimes which filled his judges with horror. Even in the midst of such revelations, however, he endeavoured to relieve himself of a part of the blame, by complaining of a bad education, and of the arts of Prelati and his accomplices; who, working upon his infatuated predilections for forbidden studies, led him on insensibly from horror to horror, till at length his mind became seared to the sense of guilt. It is remarkable that the audience, at this period of the trial, forgot the horror which such a monster ought to have inspired, and melted into tears of compassion.

Gilles de Retz was then condemned to be dragged in chains to the meadow of the Magdelaine, near Nantes, and there to be bound to a post, raised on a pile of faggots, and burned alive. The fathers and mothers of families who witnessed the trial, fasted for three days after, according to the custom of the period, in order to obtain a hearing for their prayers in behalf of his soul. They at the same time scourged their children with great severity, to impress upon their memory the awful lesson they had received.

The marshal was conducted to the place of punishment in the midst of a vast procession, formed of the monastic orders, and the clergy and secular congregation of the city. He was much cast down, and seemed to dread the sufferings he was about to undergo; but these, through the interest of his friends, were in part commuted; and when the flames rose, he was strangled, and, with comparatively little pain, yielded forth his spirit to the latter judgment.

The ruins of the château of Verrière, and the whole scene around them, have an air of melancholy and desolation that disposes the mind to reverie. A stair cut in the rock leads to a little hall tapestried with ivy; and round this are planted seven funereal trees, as monuments to the manes of the seven murdered wives. At some distance from the château, there were found, in 1810, a number of slate coffins. Near the Verrière, the ruins of an old bridge are seen under the surface of the Erdre; but the date of this construction is altogether unknown. "None of those associations," says M. Richer, "which connect the epochs of history, are attached to the banks of the Erdre. This tranquil river is the image of oblivion; and on its shores, as on those of Lethe, we seem to lose the memory of the past."

Farther on, the basin of La Dénerie, with its picturesque cottages and poplar-groves, presents a character of scenery more cheerful and more beautiful than any we have seen since leaving Nantes. The château is too bare to be pleasing—it wants drapery. The old château of La Gâcherie, beyond, with its feudal belfry,

is much finer; and the plain near it is terminated by a splendid mass of forest. In 1537, Marguerite de Valois, the celebrated Queen of Navarre, spent some months in this retreat; and as she was accustomed to amuse herself with writing in her journeys, the banks of the Erdre, in all probability, inspired some of her tales.

After passing several country houses, we get a glimpse of the bourg of Sucé, a place as ancient as the days of Barbe-Torte, the conqueror of the Normans. It is situated, in the manner of a sea-port, at the bottom of a creek, the sides of which are lofty, and covered with a thick foliage. On the opposite, or left bank of the Erdre, are the remains of an ancient seignorial château, which served as a country residence of the bishops. The principal gate is still preserved entire; and, standing on the summit of a conical rock, it presents a very picturesque appearance.

At Mazerolles the scene changes. The river widens, and the low banks, covered with mist, are faintly seen in the distance. In the twilight, when the shore is only half seen, or altogether escapes the eye, one might imagine himself upon the ocean. The plain of waters appears illimitable; the silence is intense; and the river so black, so heavy, so stirless, that you may fancy it the Dead Sea. In the midst of this noiseless solitude, there are two islands—the only islands in the whole course of the river. One of these is thickly wooded, and covered with the vine of Saint Denis. There was found in it, below the surface of the ground, a canoe formed of the trunk of a single tree, in the manner of savages. The second island boasts of one tree—but this is an

old oak, whose branches sustain an image of the holy Virgin. Many pilgrimages are made to the spot by persons suffering from fevers produced by the miasma of the neighbouring marshes, that in summer appear above the surface of the water which at other seasons covers them. The apparently limitless sea, on which we are at present voyaging, is strangely contracted in extent in such times of drought. The surface is then formed, in great part, of immense plains, covered with verdure. In fine weather numerous flocks of cattle may be seen plunging into the water, and swimming towards the marshes—if they ought not rather to be termed floating islands. But the exploit is occasionally fatal; for the tempting vegetation too often conceals holes through which the adventurers sink into unfathomable gulfs below.

Passing some villages and a château of little interest, the river at length narrows in earnest, and, losing the character of a lake or a dead sea, takes that of an inconsiderable stream. The current begins to be felt, but it flows without noise and without rapidity. The meadows which border the canal are no longer floating islands, but tracts of marshy ground; and soon we reach the point where the river ceases altogether to be navigable, and find ourselves at the little town of Nort.

CHAPTER IX.

BLUE-BEARD.

SCENE I.

Towards the close of the fourteenth century, there stood near the left bank of the Erdre, about two leagues from Nantes, a little pastoral village, of which there is not a vestige to be seen at the present day, except a few moss-covered stones, that bear indistinct traces of the hand of man. The spot has a singularly lonely and desolate appearance. Not a single human habitation is in sight; the dead river lies "floating many a rood" in the distance; and the silence that reigns over the whole scene has in it something strange, and almost awful.

At the time of which it is our hint to speak, although the general features of nature were perhaps the same, their effect was greatly modified by the human colony set down in the midst of the wilderness. Then were heard among the woods the voices of men — the gleesome laugh of boyhood — the songs of young maidens — the whispers of love; and were seen a hundred wreaths of blue smoke curling up through the trees, and leading the thoughts to associations of bright fire-sides, and bright faces around them.

Of all the young girls in this simple society, Agathe

was at once the gayest and the most beautiful. She was, in fact, the coquette, par excellence, of the village; and as such, the love of all the young men, and the hate of not a few of the young women — for Agathe, although amiable in the main, did not always bear her honours blushingly. Her really warm heart, it must be said, was frozen over by a thin incrustation of vanity; and although this would sometimes thaw — nay, shiver into a thousand pieces, yet, somehow or other, the fragments would always reunite. This gave an inconstancy to her character, which in certain cases marred the effects of her beauty. It was, in particular, the curse of Olivier's life, a youth who had long paid his addresses to the fair insensible, and who, unhappily, found it impossible to become chilled by her coldness, or disgusted by her levity.

Olivier was far above Agathe in parentage, fortune, and expectations; and this was partly the cause of her assumed indifference. Her companions congratulated her so loudly — and some of them with tears in their eyes — on so fortunate a conquest, that her vanity was piqued; and she determined to shew the world that *she* at least did not look upon the addresses of Olivier as an honour. Time went on, however; and Time, although represented by the poets and painters as an old bald man, is the true Cupid of seventeen. The heart of Agathe began to thaw insensibly, and not, as heretofore, in fits and starts. She looked less at Olivier, and listened longer. The breath of evening, as they walked together, came richer and sweeter upon her senses; the melody of the woods fell more softly on her ear; and

she would turn round, *almost* pressing the arm of her lover,

"And watch the dying notes, and start and smile."

Her lips, however, had not as yet confirmed the confession of her averted eyes and mantling cheeks; but Olivier felt himself so happy in his suspense, that he dared not, by over-urgency, run the risk of awakening in her heart that juvenile devil which had so long tormented him, and which, "peradventure," as he said, "is not dead, but sleepeth."

But all this appeared to approach an end. Day after day Agathe grew softer and kinder; and there seemed to want only another lonely walk, another still and perfumed evening, another concert of the minstrels of the grove, to set the maiden down, the light of love around her, at her own fireside—mending her husband's hose. This, however, was not to be. Fate had in reserve for her another destiny; and village maidens must "dree their weird" as well as queens.

One evening she strolled out alone, and chose, accidentally no doubt, the way to a small town where Olivier had passed the day on business. The air was mild, and the sky serene; and, lost in pleasant tnoughts, she walked on, till, on reaching the brow of an eminence, she saw a lake of the Erdre, called in the language of the district a plain, gleaming far away in the golden light. At that age of the soul when sensation begins to blend with sentiment (soon, alas! to be disunited anew), we are all admirers of nature; and Agathe could not resist the desire she felt to see more closely so lovely a picture.

This, it is true, would deprive her of the chance of seeing Olivier that evening; but already some discontent had begun to rise in her mind connected with her lover's delay. It was past the hour when he might have returned; he must have been quite sure that he would meet her walking there accidentally; swains may be spoiled, like children, by too much encouragement — and in short, the young beauty determined, partly in a kind of pet, to forsake the path, and make towards the distant river.

Before she had arrived at her proposed object — which seemed to fly as she advanced — the deeper shadows of evening began to descend. The woods flung a broader gloom on her path; the birds were silent; and as she reached the bottom of a kind of amphitheatre, from the opposite ridge of which she expected to see the lake, she paused in sudden dread. Every thing around was so black, so dismal, so indefinite! It seemed as if she had descended from the cheerful surface of the earth into a grave. She had already turned, to retrace her steps, although half blaming the childishness of her fears, when she saw at a little distance some ruined walls — whether of a castle or a cottage she could not tell; and this object, by giving a precise direction to her vague imaginings, recalled her courage. It filled, in fact, the dismal area with poetry and romance; and although the village girl hardly knew the meaning of the terms, she possessed enough of the refinement of nature to be sensible to their impressions.

Resolving, at all events, to abandon her pursuit of the flying lake, she yet advanced a few paces nearer

the ruins, for the purpose of obtaining a better view; intending, the next moment, to endeavour to regain, by the nearest way, the public path which she had so foolishly abandoned. The building, of which the remains lay before her, had evidently been neither a castle nor a cottage; but, from some peculiarities in the low and shattered walls, she guessed it rather to have been a chapel; and, crossing her bosom, her lips began to move in the paternoster which was wont to come forth almost unconsciously from a Catholic mouth. Another step or two convinced her that her surmise was correct. The roof, however, and the greater part of the walls, had mouldered away; and on looking into the desert area which had once been the nave, she saw, at the farther end, with a shudder, which she in vain endeavoured to repress, the entrance to a burying-vault.

She stood for some time gazing at this object; till at length, alarmed as well as ashamed, she endeavoured, by a strong effort, to banish the infantine fears which, by deluding and bewildering her imagination, threatened every moment to realise themselves. The thorns and brambles, in fact, which half concealed the vault, began to move. Agathe thought she was fainting, and that this was a symptom, and caught at the ruins for support. But the next moment, a human figure appeared suddenly at the door of the house of mortality, and a scream broke from the lips of the startled girl, which was repeated by the thousand echoes of the amphitheatre.

She did not faint, but she was as unconscious, for some moments, of outward circumstances as if she had

done so. When her recollection returned, she found herself sitting on a stone of the porch, and a tall man wrapped in a dark cloak standing near her, gazing with strange earnestness in her face. She rose in confusion, and curtsying to the stranger, who was evidently of the rank which required such homage, moved away as quickly as her tottering limbs would permit. The stranger strode by her side. In vain she quickened, then slackened her pace — he still maintained the same relative position. Agathe was at length emboldened by curiosity to look up ; and she saw with surprise, that her companion, who was a young and handsome man, was buried in a reverie which appeared to render him wholly unconscious of her presence. This odd and unexpected neglect contributed much to restore the rustic beauty's self-possession ; and at length, as they gained an eminence which commanded an extensive view of the country, including the public road to the village, she stopped suddenly, and said in a resolute tone —

" I thank you humbly, sir, for the escort with which you have been pleased to honour me — I am now almost at home." The stranger started from his reverie at her voice. An air of embarrassment overspread his features ; he looked at her once more earnestly and inquiringly ; and at length, as if forming a resolution, replied —

" You wish me then to leave you ? What a strange fate is mine, that I should inspire distrust or hatred where I would fain seek confidence and pity ! Look at me. I am perhaps not an object of admiration ; but

neither am I calculated to create loathing. Here are we — two denizens of the earth, meeting by chance, or destiny, in a lonely spot sacred to the dead; — why should we fly from each other? Why not enter into the communings which relieve the heart of its feeling of solitude? We are not enemies by nature — but are of the same species, and the same country. What curse is it that hangs upon the human race, turning them one against the other, as if by instinctive hostility, even when most closely connected by social and natural ties!" The stranger's words were addressed to Agathe; yet they seemed to flow in soliloquy. She looked at him several times while he spoke, but her eyes sunk under the brightness of his. She saw enough, however, to ascertain that he was singularly handsome and noble-looking, that his hair was blacker than the raven's wing, and his complexion almost startlingly pale.

To be selected for his intercommunings by a man like him, to be acknowledged by a lord — for no less he could be — as a fellow-denizen of the earth, was something; and Agathe remarked, half in curiosity, half in coquetry, "For so great an admirer of sociality, the ruined vault where I saw you first, was, methinks, a very odd resort!"

"I had business there," said the stranger.

"Business!"

"Yes,"— said he, as he drew from beneath his cloak an infant's skull. "Why start at the sight?" he continued — "Do you dislike to look upon the dead as well as the living? What is there in this to fear?"

"What is there in it to covet?" demanded she —

"why violate the sanctuary of the grave to possess a thing at once so useless and so mournful?"

"These are questions which to answer would be to make you miserable — unless permitted to share the advantages as well as the knowledge. They should be answered, however — I think, I feel, I know that I should answer them, if I knew you better. You seem to me as one for whom I have long been looking. There is a spirit, a meaning, in your eye, of which perhaps you are yourself unconscious, but which my soul, practised in the mysteries of nature, knows how to interpret. I feel as if we had known one another in some former state of existence, and only half remembered it in this. Let us be friends — or, if the request be too much for one so recently known, let us become acquainted. I would fain relieve my mind of a load of knowledge which lies upon it almost like guilt. I have long sought, and sought in vain, the individual in whom the confidence is destined to be placed. If I am not deceived in an art known to few, you are that individual!"

Agathe did not know what to reply to this strange address; which, however, she believed to be strange, not in itself, but as addressed to her. Filled with all the superstition of the age, and acquainted, although of course imperfectly, with the reveries of the astrologer, the alchemist, the physiognomist, and the other enthusiasts, who, at that period, groping in the dark after knowledge, were misled by shadows, she found nothing wonderful in the rhapsody, except that it was addressed

by a noble to a peasant — and she accordingly hinted at what was passing in her mind.

" The distinctions of rank," replied her companion, " are nothing. A prince without power, and without fortune, is nothing better than a peasant. Were I at this moment to array you in the state of a queen — to rear a silken canopy over your head — to place your foot upon marble and gilding — to stretch under your sway a tract of country greater than the eye could measure — would you be any thing less than a queen, because you were born in a village? It is in my power to do this — but this is nothing. Vanity has no desire, and pride no object, which is not attainable by us both. If you are she whom I seek, queens will be your hand-maidens, and knights and barons your slaves: but enough of this. I may be mistaken in your individuality — let me know you better, and I shall disclose what you will tremble with wonder and delight to hear." The stranger took her hand, and bowing his head upon it gravely, touched it with his lips. He then turned away, without another word; and in a few moments his graceful figure was lost in the shadows of a wood.

The effect of this adventure upon Agathe may be conceived. One moment she would imagine the stranger to be a fiend in human shape, commissioned to betray and destroy her; and the next, rejecting with horror the uncharitable idea, she would plunge into day-dreams as wild and glorious as those that haunt the slumbers of youth. But Olivier! Was *he* then so

soon forgotten? By no means. In all her wanderings of the imagination, he was by her side. He was the king of the melo-drama, and she the queen. As for the stranger, he was a mere abstraction — or rather a personification of good fortune. She thought of him as of a phantom — a good genius — a fairy — but his image never presented itself as that of a man.

Her spirits were strangely variable during the following day. She was sometimes extravagantly gay, and sometimes sad almost to weeping. As for Olivier, he had little cause to like either her mirth or melancholy. The period had arrived, he fondly fancied, when all reserve would be thrown aside; but now, as if by the interference of some demon, he found her absent and pre-occupied. She was kind without a touch of tenderness, and familiar without a shadow of confidence. Wearied and mortified, the young man at last resolved to give her a night to consider of her conduct, and throwing himself upon his horse, rode home to his father's farm.

Agathe, for the first time in her life, was rejoiced that her lover was gone. Had the stranger appointed a meeting, it is more than probable that her pride and maiden timidity would have caused her to disappoint him. But so far from this, he had only alluded vaguely and hypothetically to a second interview. He, in fact, was to be the giver, and she the receiver — he the patron, and she the client; and Agathe, stirred to the adventure by vanity, ambition, curiosity, and the other devils whose name is Legion, resolved to walk once more to the ruined chapel.

She found the stranger sitting on the stone at the door. He rose at her approach, and received her with a bland and winning smile, pressing her hand like a familiar acquaintance. Agathe, for the first time, looked steadily and inquiringly in his eyes — where she read, or fancied she read, through all their brightness, an expression that filled her with distrust. She blushed deeply, and, drawing back, made him a low reverence, recalling at once his station and her own. When she looked up again, however, his features had resumed the same immobility as when he first walked, like a spirit, by her side. She had been mistaken. He was more like a statue than a man; and his face, of white marble, resembled a monumental effigy.

But there was another peculiarity in his countenance which made her at first regard him with a kind of horror. At their former interview it was too dark for her to notice more than that his hair was perfectly black; but now she observed that his glossy and finely arranged beard had, in addition, a shade of *blue!* This circumstance, noticed at another time, and in another person, would perhaps have made her laugh; but in the tall, dignified, and graceful figure before her, standing so mute and motionless, amidst the relics of past ages, it produced an effect that conveyed an idea almost of the supernatural. Agathe, assured by her own feelings that there could be nothing earthly in his, awaited with strong curiosity the termination of his reverie.

"It cannot be," said he, at last — "not to-day, nor here. Knowing that it was your wish to see me

this evening, I broke through most important business in order that you might not suffer disappointment. I was wrong, however, in my calculation — occasioned doubtless by haste — and expected you half an hour ago. We must delay an interview solemn and important to us both, till to-morrow — shall I say at midday?"

"It is impossible," said Agathe, with a sigh — "I am engaged to go to Nantes with almost the whole village, to act a mystery given to the people by the Lord de Retz."

"It matters not — the following day will suffice. I shall see you at Nantes," and the stranger bowing gravely, turned away, and disappeared behind the ruins.

SCENE II.

The next morning Agathe rose feverish and unrefreshed, and prepared with little good-will for her pleasure-excursion to Nantes. Olivier was her attendant, and was so much affected by the evident change in her appearance, that he was ready to endure any kind of caprice in the belief that his mistress was unwell. When they at length reached the place of destination, and the band of villagers, that had appeared of such magnitude on the road, was engulfed and lost in the crowd of the city, it was with some difficulty that the lovers could keep together. So great was the bustle, and so new the scene, that Agathe, who rarely left her village, was amused in spite of herself; but when a mighty shout arose from the populace, and a general

rush took place towards the spot where her party stood, she turned pale with terror, and clung to the arm of Olivier.

At this moment, a deafening burst of music rose in the air at a little distance, and the people, wild with joy, yelled in chorus. It was said that the lord of the festival was proceeding in grand procession to attend the commencement of the mystery; and all who were strong enough to struggle were anxious to get near, being aware that the generous Lord de Retz not unfrequently signified his acceptance of the homage of the people by showering among them handfuls of money. Olivier was only desirous of getting his mistress safely out of the pressure; but after a few moments this was found to be impracticable; and, yielding to the torrent, they suffered themselves to be carried to the very verge of the path which was kept clear for the passage of the procession.

First came a band of valets, clearing the way with little ceremony with their cudgels; and next the ministers of the chapel of the château, dressed sumptuously, and mounted on superb steeds. Among these were intermixed so many crucifixes, banners, and reliquaries, that the hands of the crowd were wearied making the sign of the cross; but when at length the insignia of the patron saint of the family made their appearance, all fell upon their knees.

Agathe, bewildered, though delighted with the scene, neither observed the actions of those around her, nor its cause; but continued standing, and enjoying intensely the opportunity thus afforded her, for the first

time, of looking along the whole line of the procession. It extended on either hand as far as she could see; and immediately following the choristers of the chapel, who closed the ecclesiastical part of the parade, came a band of at least a hundred gleaming helmets, interrupted by a space in the middle of the line, occupied by a single individual. This was no doubt the Lord de Retz, the author of, and first actor in the ceremony, the individual to whom all eyes and all hearts were at that moment turned.

"What a happy man!" sighed the vain and ambitious Agathe; "how happy must be his wife!"

The horses of the men-at-arms pranced boundingly and proudly past her; the roar of the crowd came nearer and nearer—for no one presumed to shout, or even to rise from his knees, till the object of his plaudits had gone by; and our village heroine, with throbbing breast and gleaming eyes, watched with all the curiosity of a girl for the appearance of the grand personage of the scene.

On a splendid courser, that walked mincingly along, as if unwilling to touch the earth, came at length the Lord de Retz. His face, however, was turned another way; and Agathe, in desperation, almost determined to scream for the purpose of attracting his observation, and thus obtaining an opportunity of feasting her eyes on features of such distinction.

But this was unnecessary; for just when about to pass her, he looked round. He drew in his steed suddenly, but gracefully; and the motion was instantaneously imitated through the whole line behind him: then,

making a full pause, he pulled off his plumed cap, and, looking with a brilliant, but respectful smile to Agathe, bowed his head till his hair waved upon the arch of his horse's neck. Agathe was stunned. But, although she lost for some minutes her mental consciousness, she walked out of the crowd, assisted by her lover apparently as well in body as if nothing strange had happened.

"Tell me," cried she to those around her, as she awoke with a start, "who, in the name of Heaven, was he who bowed to me?"

"It was BLUE-BEARD!" replied an old woman, peering with a malicious smile in her face.

"Agathe!" said Olivier, solemnly, "you owe to yourself, as well as to me, to declare how it is that you are acquainted with the Lord de Retz."

"Is he married?" inquired Agathe, almost in the tone of soliloquy, and unconscious of her lover's voice.

"He! he! he!" laughed the old woman. "Married, quotha! Ay, often enough!" and as she hobbled away, her malicious laugh jarred on the nerves of the whole party.

The next day, Agathe, who had been ill and feverish all the morning, went out to walk about half an hour before mid-day. Some hours elapsed, and she had not returned. Her parents began to get uneasy; and Olivier, who had come to require a serious explanation of the scene of yesterday, began to get vexed. When at last the sun set, and the shades of evening began to gather around, even he participated in the uneasiness of the parents; and inquiries were set anxiously on foot

respecting her disappearance. It was easily ascertained by what route she had left the village; and some labourers working in the fields at a distance were able to point out the exact place at which she had left the public path, and in what direction she had afterwards walked. The way led, or rather pointed towards the château of Verrière, the residence of the Lord de Retz; but this was so distant, and the country so much intersected with forests and marshes, that it was impossible to have been the place of her destination.

The idea, however, did pass across the jealous brain of the lover, although the next moment it was disclaimed both by his heart and judgment. At Nantes, so little did she know of this personage, that she was under the necessity of inquiring his name; and his bow could have been nothing more than a libertine homage to her charms, rendered the more remarkable at the moment by her being the only person standing erect. The Lord de Retz was famed for his devotion to female beauty; and already some rumours began to get abroad among the peasantry relating to the fate of his several wives — for he had been more than once a widower. Such stories, however, were not easily credited of a man who not only represented mysteries gratis to the populace of Nantes, but treated the spectators to refreshments in the course of the performance. Olivier, however, without believing all, was at last quite ready to believe part; and had no doubt that his mistress had been decoyed away by the agents of the libertine with the worst of purposes. His resolution was taken immediately. He did not even return to inform his friends at the village, and

request their assistance, but pressed on alone, in the direction pointed out by his informers.

He passed through the amphitheatre without remarking, as the more imaginative Agathe had done, the ruined chapel, and ascended the steep beyond. The view here was magnificent, embracing the large lake of the Erdre, and many of its windings before and behind; but Olivier bestowed not a glance upon the scene: he pressed forward through valley and over steep, threading the forest with the intuitive instinct of the forest-born, and leaping the marsh-pool with the agility of a deer. He was able for some time to steer his course by the direction of the river, which was visible from every height; but by and by the mist gathering on its surface, and rising from the marshes at its sides, rendered its form so indistinct, that it no longer served as a guide.

Olivier, whose fears for Agathe increased every moment, plunged on almost at random, till at length even the dusky twilight was no more, lost and absorbed in the darkness of night. He had by this time entered an extensive wood, which had appeared, to his hopes at least, if not to his conviction, so long as there was light enough to enable him to form some idea of its shape, to resemble the forest scenery that surrounded the château of Verrière. He still pressed on, therefore, in the expectation of seeing lights in the windows, which might direct his further search.

And his expectations were realised; for he had not stumbled on in the dark for many minutes when he saw something in the distance which resembled the glim-

mering of a taper. The light increased in magnitude as he approached, till at length he was somewhat startled to find that it must proceed from the flame of a torch. An opening in the wood, besides, by enabling him to catch a glimpse of the dull sky behind, convinced him that no human habitation intervened; and he paused in some perplexity to consider.

Till now, the only idea of which he was conscious was an earnest desire to reach the château. There ended his definite plans. It contained Agathe, as he persuaded himself; he would be guided by circumstances in his attempt to rescue her; and if this failed, as was but too probable, he would at least have the satisfaction of dying in her cause. The appearance of a torch, however, at night in a lonely wood — and no one who is unacquainted with the manners of the fourteenth century can appreciate the heroism of Olivier in adventuring into such a place in the dark — somewhat disconcerted him. Of all the dangers which he had prepared to encounter, this seemed the most terrific; and while some wild and singular tales connected with Gilles de Retz and his wives, at which he had once smiled in credulity, forced themselves like realities upon his imagination, he drew near the light in fear and trembling.

It was fortunate for Olivier that some revulsion of his feelings had taken place to diminish the rapidity of his approach, otherwise he must have fallen over a precipice of naked rocks, which intervened between him and the object of his wonder. The hollow below, of inconsiderable area, was almost circular, and bound in by a

range of cliffs, the sides of which were naked, but the jagged tops surmounted by uncouth-looking trees, twisting their branches over into the gulf. The bottom of the amphitheatre itself was swollen here and there into irregular mounds; but, with the exception of a tall yew-tree that stood in the middle, it was wholly naked of foliage.

On the upper branches of this tree hung the light which Olivier had supposed to be a torch. What was its nature he could not tell; but it seemed to be placed there as a lamp to enlighten this strange scene, on which it shed a steady, but dull and sepulchral glare. At the bottom of the tree there was a pit, which the shuddering witness speedily recognised, by its oblong form, to be an open grave; and near it lay a human figure—the corse, no doubt, as Olivier thought, destined for such unholy burial. At a few paces distant there was a heap of stones rudely placed together, resembling an altar, and near it an object which seemed to be a basket covered with a white cloth.

All this was so strange and unworldly, that when the first emotion of fear was over, Olivier would easily have persuaded himself that he was in a dream. There was, indeed, spread over the whole scene the same kind of dimness which attends our impressions in sleep. The sides of the amphitheatre were without definite form; and their projecting points and indented fissures, brought into play, in light and shadow, by the lamp, seemed like unearthly shapes waiting for the unhallowed rite; while the unchanging surface of the sky, seen among the twisted trees above, gave the idea of

spectral faces looking down through the branches. The silence was so intense, that Olivier feared to interrupt it with his own breathing; and at length, dreading that he was fascinated there by a spell, he recited the paternoster inwardly, and, turning resolutely but noiselessly away, prepared to leave a spot dedicated, it was too evident, to services at which no Christian man ought to assist, even as a spectator.

The next moment, however, a stir below caused him, half in fear, half in curiosity, to resume his observation. The supposed corse had moved its position, and discovered itself to be a hideous dwarf lying fast asleep. The light of the lamp fell upon the heavy, lumpish, and yet malicious features of the face that was now turned upward; and Olivier as he gazed could easily have believed that he saw, in bodily presence, one of those goblin-sprites whose business it is to mislead and destroy.

A sound was now heard, apparently from the opposite precipice, but so faint that Olivier's ear could not have detected it but for the almost preternatural stillness of the moment. At the instant, however, the sleeping dwarf sprung upon his feet, and, throwing one of those somersets — head over heels — which are common on the modern stage, stood immovable. Presently a tall figure entered the arena slowly by the further end. His dress resembled in some measure the robes of a high-priest; but on his breast and forehead were large plates, apparently of polished gold; and he carried a long black wand in his right hand. Behind him, two other persons, one supporting the other, approached,

still more slowly, who at the exclamation of "Hold!" from the magician, for such Olivier deemed him to be, stood still.

The priest then prostrated himself before the altar, remaining, however, at a little distance; and, on rising, touched it with his wand, when immediately a clear blue light arose from the summit. His features were now distinctly visible; and Olivier saw that they were of a commanding and majestic cast, with very little appearance of age, although his beard was as white as snow.

"Approach!" exclaimed the priest, and his voice rang like music through the amphitheatre. The two persons behind obeyed; and as they came within the light of the altar, Olivier almost fainted when he saw that one of the actors in this accursed rite was the Lord de Retz, and the other—Agathe! For some moments he was affected by a reeling of the brain and a swimming of the eyes, which prevented him from either seeing or hearing; but on recovering his recollection, the two lost ones were close to the altar, which he now observed was surrounded by a circle of human bones.

What passed afterwards was in dumb show. A dagger was placed in the hand of Agathe, and her companion appeared to solicit her aid in vain to use it in some manner. He at length bared his arm, and held it close over the sacrificial fire. She still appeared to hesitate; till a groan of pain escaped his lips, when she suddenly plunged the blade into the scorched flesh. The blood spouted from the wound upon the flame, which rose up with a sudden flash that rendered the

whole amphitheatre for some moments as clear as day.

"It is accepted!" said the high-priest, who stood without the circle. "Another blood-sprinkling, and all is accomplished!" A pause took place. Agathe gazed in the face of the Lord de Retz, who seemed to shrink from the look. At last, seizing both her hands, he addressed her for some time in a low but earnest tone. She appeared at first not clearly to comprehend his meaning; but soon, as gathering conviction forced itself upon her mind, she raised her hands in horror and aversion. He became more animated and urgent — seemed to promise, threaten, command; while Agathe remained silent, at first in determination, and then in stupefaction. At this moment the hideous dwarf caught up the basket covered with a white cloth, and with a grin half of malice half of gratulation, handed it over the circle to the Lord de Retz.

"Strike!" cried the high-priest, in a voice of thunder, as the baron drew aside the cloth. The cry of a young child followed; and at the word, Agathe, starting from her trance, dashed the dagger upon the earth, and catching the infant to her breast, covered it with tears and kisses.

The Lord de Retz sprung out of the circle, and rushed towards the priest, who was pacing to and fro in impatience and disdain, and now stopped short under the rock on which Olivier leant.

"Father," cried the baron, "is there no other means? She is obstinate: her hand may be forced to do the deed, but her heart never!"

"Hast thou tried her well?" demanded the old man. "Hast thou touched upon the master-spring of her heart? She is fair, and therefore vain; poor, and therefore a lover of gold; handsome, and therefore ambitious of title and nobility; a woman, and therefore given to pleasure, and pomp, and sway."

"I have tried her in all these. I have wrought upon her love and her fear—her pride, vanity, avarice, and ambition. For the tithe of what I have offered her, *I* would decimate mankind!"

"Then, my son, thy trouble is lost: the blood must be shed by a pure maiden, and of her own free-will."

"And there is *no* other means?" ejaculated the baron in despair.

"Yes—one. The maid must first be sacrificed by thee; and then the blood of the infant will be accepted at thy own hands."

"It is a hard alternative," muttered the baron between his teeth. "She is fair—I had other intentions with regard to her."

"The choice is thine."

"I like her courage, because it resembles my own—and her feeling, because it does not. Although ignorant, she has talent; and if once steeped in crime, would be useful. Besides, she is fair!—*Must* she die?"

"The choice is thine."

"Then die she shall, if she will not kill!—but I will try her once more," and the desperate man rushed again towards the altar. What he said it was impossible to distinguish; but one moment his face grew bright with enthusiasm, and the next black with rage;

Agathe in the meantime only straining the infant the closer to her bosom. At length, in sudden fury, he caught up the dagger, and grasping her by the hair, while he held the blade to her bosom, exclaimed, in a tone which seemed to make the air vibrate,

"Speak! in a single word — or sign but with thy finger in answer. Wilt thou kill, or die?"

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!" cried a voice at the instant; but before the adjuration of Olivier was complete, the flame on the altar, and the lamp on the tree, disappeared. A sound like the rattling of bones ran round the amphitheatre, mingled with sobs and wild laughter; and as the lover of Agathe descended the cliffs with headlong impetuosity, it seemed to his excited imagination as if he heard also the gushing of blood.

By the time he had reached the plain below, all was silent; but he heard, or fancied he did so, the distant trampling of feet, and, assisted by the faint gray light of the sky, where not a star was visible, he rushed towards the place by which he had seen the actors in this memorable scene enter the arena. The faint twinkling of a lamp, although several hundred yards before him, served for some time as a landmark; but soon, even this disappeared; and having entered the forest, which extended far beyond the amphitheatre, he groped his way in utter darkness. So quickly did he move, however — for his defeat of the magician had inspired him both with pride and courage — that he speedily heard again the sound of the retreating footsteps; and

soon these appeared so near, that he was fain to walk stealthily in order to escape detection.

In a comparatively open part of the wood, he at length overtook two of the party, whose forms he was able to recognise by their singular outline in the midst of the "darkness visible." When Olivier found that they were the dwarf and the sacrilegious priest, he was about to make a circuit, in order that he might get before them, and so have some chance of falling in with Agathe ere she was shut up from his view in the château. There appeared, however, from their angry, though smothered voices, to be some altercation going on between them; and as they suddenly stopped short, he drew near to listen.

"Speak out, thou imp of hell!" cried the priest, "for we are now far enough to speak out without danger. Thou, who canst hear the breaking of a gossamer's thread beneath a flake of snow when thou willest it, wherefore was this interruption, and perhaps discovery?"

"They were of Heaven, good master, I verily believe," answered the dwarf; "for if they had come from any other quarter, either I or you should certainly have known of them."

"Thou art a traitor!" said the priest.

"Nay, now you do me too much honour—I am only a fool to serve so long a thankless master. Do I not know your real designs in this night's business?—and what do they advantage me? Was not the introduction of the maid into the condition for the sole pur-

pose of setting this mad lord to cater for your pleasures? The blood of the infant alone would have sufficed to steep his shallow soul in hell-fire, and so reduce it to an equality with yours. For your pleasure, indeed!—Why not for mine? Who are you, Signor Prelati? You play your part, and I play mine; and, excepting that you are a tall man, with a lying beard, and I a mishapen dwarf, we are equals!"

"Equals! thou slave and traitor!" and he griped him by the throat. "Is there equality in that? What holds me from punishing your insolence with death? But go, I spurn and pardon thee—take care to watch better again!" and dashing the unresisting weakling upon the earth, he strode rapidly away.

The dwarf stirred not for some time; and Olivier began to think that the fall had been still heavier than was intended. Presently, however, he heard a faint sound from his lips, which gradually became more distinct.

"It is full! it is full! it is full!" he muttered with a wild rapidity, which led the listener to imagine that his brain was affected by the shock his body had sustained.

"What is full?" said he, stepping forward, in the hope of being able to elicit some information from his raving; but the dwarf either did not hear, or did not heed him.

"It is full! it is full!" he continued. "The measure is full! The hour is come! I will be revenged! I swear it by the heaven I have abjured, and by the hell I have embraced! I swear it by the devils who

will *not* come when my master calls, because they dread to face a more horrible fiend than themselves!" His body quivered with impotent fury, foam flew from his dry lips, and he dug his curved fingers into the earth, as if in the act of tearing an enemy. Olivier knelt suddenly beside him.

"If you would be revenged," said he, "behold an instrument! Enable me to deliver the young maiden, and I promise you the blood of Prelati!"

"Are you a man," demanded the dwarf, raising himself on his elbow, "or a true devil come at last? But it matters not. You promise vengeance, and in a tone that I believe. Raise me on my legs;—there—now give me your arm. If I should faint by the way, still drag me on; for when near the lair that contains Prelati, I shall awaken, were it from death!"

When Olivier and his strange companion at length reached the Château de Verrière, they were admitted by a secret postern, without question or remark. The dwarf was a confidential agent, and as such was accustomed, at all hours of the day and night, to pass and repass, whether accompanied or not. It was, in fact, a matter of prudence on the part of the porter, to see no one introduced by him; and it is probable, had the demand on him been made, that in the present instance he could not have given the slightest description of the stranger whom he permitted to enter.

After threading some dark and winding passages, in which they did not meet a single human being, they at

last reached a doorway, to which the dwarf applied a key.

"Enter," said he, "and wait till my return." Olivier entered; and the next instant heard the door locked behind him. This was a pretty termination to his adventure! It was in vain to throw himself against the door, to gnash his teeth, and curse the simplicity that had permitted him to become the dupe of so execrable a treachery. He was here bound hard and fast; the door did not even shake at his efforts, the iron stanchions of the window were as thick as a man's wrist, and the walls of the apartment were of solid stone. Even in these circumstances, however, the fate of Agathe affected him more than his own; and he regarded his captivity rather as a misfortune to her than to himself. In the midst of the most torturing reflections, the door suddenly opened, and the dwarf entered the room alone.

"Welcome!" said Olivier, catching him fiercely by the arm,—"but my meditations for the last few minutes induce me to ask you a question. If you desire vengeance on him whom you call Prelati, why not slay him yourself? You have courage, if not strength; and no doubt a thousand opportunities are afforded you in the course of the day, or night, for secret assassination, at which I believe you would not shrink: or if you fear bloodshed, why not betray his impostures to the Lord de Retz? The service would surely deserve at his hands your own pardon. Why move towards your object in this round-about manner, and employ a stranger to

assist,—who, for aught you know, may eventually be tempted to betray you?"

"Your questions are reasonable," replied the dwarf, and shall be answered. If you do my bidding, you will rescue your mistress, and slay Prelati in her defence, in the character of an individual of this household, who is already cared for; and, being provided with ample funds by me, you will afterwards retire, for at least a season, to some distant part of the country. Were I to take vengeance into my own hands, it would be certain destruction; for the Lord de Retz is so besotted with this vagabond Italian, that he would distrust the evidence of his own senses, if it accused him of imposture. Are you satisfied?"

"Nearly so. But tell me, have I not as much to fear from the Lord de Retz as from Prelati?"

"More, but not suddenly. He will propose marriage; nay, perhaps, if the whim strike him, perform it. All this cannot be done in a moment; and to-night you must escape, or never. Are you now satisfied?"

"I am."

"Here, then, are the accoutrements of a trusty man-at-arms, whom you resemble in stature and appearance. Fit them on as closely as possible, and close your helmet, so that no one may see your face. Follow me to the chamber of Prelati, whom I have already seen. Him you will follow to the chamber of your mistress, and there act as becomes a man. When you have slain him, proceed fearlessly to the secret postern, which is only twenty yards from the room door, in a straight

direction, and shewing this signet-ring to the porter, take leave of the Château de Verrière for ever. Here is a purse of gold, which will maintain you in another part of the kingdom till these events are forgotten."

During the discourse of the dwarf, Olivier was hastily arraying himself in the accoutrements of the man-at-arms; and by the time it was finished, he was fully equipped.

"Go on," said he; "I will follow you." In a few seconds they were at the apartment of the priest, who received Olivier's friend with the coldness of a man who still remembered an insult. After a few common-place words, he ordered the man-at-arms to follow; and with a trepidation which he had some difficulty in concealing, our adventurer found himself on the way to the prison-room of Agathe.

As Prelati entered a small but handsome apartment, which looked like an ante-chamber, he was uncertain whether etiquette permitted him to go in, or required him to wait without. But a well-known voice sounding from the inner room dispelled his scruples; and, imitating the stealthy pace of his companion, he crept towards an open door, from which the sounds proceeded.

"You will think of it?" he heard uttered in a voice of suppressed rage by the Lord de Retz.

"Yes," said Agathe firmly, "in my prayers for deliverance!"

"Fool — miserable fool! do you remember what I have offered? Power, grandeur, riches — every thing, in short, which is included in the title of the wife of the Lord de Retz. And to me you prefer ——"

"A man — not the murderer of infants, and oppressor of women!"

"It is enough," said the baron, in a voice so calm that it made the concealed listener shudder — "You have rejected honourable terms — behold the alternative!"

A struggle took place, and then a stifled scream arose from the lips of Agathe. Olivier, forgetting every thing at the moment, thrust Prelati aside — who stood calmly listening at the door — and rushed into the room.

"How now?" cried the Lord de Retz, unclasping one hand from the long tresses of his victim, and half drawing his sword; but on the instant he was felled to the earth by a blow from the battle-axe of the man-at-arms.

"Art thou mad, Pierre?" exclaimed Prelati, who had followed him into the room. The answer was a blow with the axe upon the breast, which would have killed a bullock — but the priest stood unmoved! Olivier in astonishment, not unmingled with horror, drew his sword instantaneously, and made a desperate lunge: it was like thrusting against a wall.

"It is in vain," said the magician, calmly; "the malice of neither men nor spirits can prevail against me. I am as much beyond injury as I am above revenge. Thou lovest that young maiden, Pierre, who has just escaped from the room. Follow, and reassure her: bestow her for the present in my apartment, where she will be safe, and leave me to recall the baron to life, but, if possible, not to memory."

"Matchless conjurer!" said Olivier to himself as he obeyed, struck with involuntary respect at this specimen of the sublime of impudence. Nevertheless, he took the liberty of locking the door behind him.

"Agathe!" he shouted at the extent of his voice, for there was no longer time for precaution; and, to his great delight, she answered from the very passage by which it had been his instructions to convey her to the postern. Her joyful astonishment at recognising her lover in the person of her deliverer may be conceived; but a clasp of the hand, and a murmured blessing, were all that time permitted. They flew to the postern and presented the signet.

"This has no power to night," said the porter, coolly returning it; and he then went back into his room, bolting it behind him. Olivier was thunderstruck. A cold perspiration broke upon his brow, and he stood mute and motionless for an instant in the stupefaction of despair.

"Olivier!" said Agathe, seeing that they were lost, "dearest Olivier,"—and she threw her arms round his neck—"forgive me for all the pain my girlish folly has so often caused you. I ever loved you, and my purest and highest happiness consisted in the hope of becoming your wife. But in token of your forgiveness, you must grant me a last boon—the test and seal of your love. Promise that you will not see me taken alive!—swear that when the latest moment of hope is past, you will stab me to the heart!"

"I do promise!" said Olivier, solemnly—"I swear it by my mother's soul!"

A furious knocking was now heard at the door of the room where Prelati and his master were confined; and the voice of the former followed, sounding more indistinctly as he called to the guardsmen for help.

"There is yet a chance!" said Olivier, starting — "the dwarf, for his own sake, will make another effort;" and he hurried his mistress along the passage. As they passed the door at which their enemies within were battering, the heart of Agathe sunk, as if to death, at the sound; but with the assistance of Olivier she gained the apartment of the dwarf before any other indications were heard of the sounds having excited attention, than the clapping of distant doors, and the calling of drowsy voices.

"Why are you here?" said the dwarf, in alarm; "and what noises are these?"

"All is lost!" answered Olivier — "The Lord de Retz is slain, and Prelati lives!" At this fatal intelligence, the countenance of the dwarf grew livid. He was silent and motionless for some time, as if struck to the heart; but at length bursting into a hideous laugh —

"I shall foil him yet!" he exclaimed, "He shall neither pin me in an iron cage, nor bury me in a living grave — between which modes of vengeance I know his thoughts are at this moment vacillating, in luxurious uncertainty. In a few moments I shall be free, or, at least, in the hands of less skilful devils! For you, I must believe that you have done your best to redeem the promise you made me, or surely you would not be here. With you I shall keep faith, were it only to sig-

nalise my fall by a miracle. Turn to the left, round that pillar, and fly as if Prelati were at your heels. When you reach the end of the passage you will understand the reason of the injunction; and then prepare yourself to act boldly and promptly." As the dwarf concluded, he forced Olivier and his mistress, who would fain have obtained more precise instructions, out of the room; and the next moment they heard its heavy bolts drawn across.

Mingling with this sound there came the rushing of feet, the clapping of doors, and the calling of voices. The whole castle was alarmed, and the fugitives expected every moment to be retaken. They obeyed the directions of the dwarf, however, with light feet and heavy hearts; and in a few minutes reached the end of the passage — which was formed of a solid wall.

"Curses on the traitor!" cried Olivier. "Oh that I should die without avenging this wrong!" But at the moment his eyes were blinded by a sudden glare of light which made the passage as clear as day, and seemed to wrap in flame the ramparts of the castle, that were seen from a window. This was followed by a trembling of the earth, and a sound that resembled thunder breaking over their heads; and then all was silent. The lovers looked aghast in one another's faces, to which the glare gave a wild and spectral appearance; and during the roar that ensued, Agathe hid her head in Olivier's bosom. But when this was over, she started as if from a trance.

"There is yet hope!" she cried. "He has fired the store of combustibles, of which they must have

made use, even in the impostures I have myself witnessed. It is just possible that we may escape in the confusion!" They retraced their steps towards the dwarf's chamber still more hastily than they had left it; but the whole wing in which it had been contained was now a pile of smoking or blazing ruins. The night air came fiercely in through the gap, and Olivier blessed the merciful token. Clambering among the burning wrecks, which completely filled up the moat, they succeeded, concealed by the smoke, and perhaps forgotten in the confusion, in gaining the forest, and, by the time the day began to appear, their native village.

Olivier, still in terror for his mistress, acted on the advice of the dwarf, and left a neighbourhood so dangerous to innocence and beauty. He removed to Nantes, where, under the safeguard of the laws, he was married to Agathe — now cured at once of her coquetry and curiosity after forbidden knowledge.

The dwarf was so utterly consumed, that not a fragment of his body could ever afterwards be found; but the Lord de Retz recovered from the blow of the battle-axe, to find the poor remains of his once princely treasure irrecoverably lost in the fire, which destroyed a great part of the château. Driven to desperation, his dreadful crimes were soon perpetrated with so little caution, that the authorities, whose vigilance was already awakened by the information boldly given by Olivier, at last succeeded in obtaining sufficient evidence to enable them to arrest even so powerful and highly connected a noble.

The next procession that Agathe saw, in which the Lord de Retz figured as the principal personage, was that of the execution of him and his accomplice and betrayer. But she rather heard than saw it; for when the chanting of the priests was yet distant, she shut up the windows of her house, and, retiring to the remotest corner, threw herself upon her knees, and remained there with pale cheeks, and moistened eyes, and moving lips, till the swell of the death-hymn died away upon her ear.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST.

THE LAST!—it is a mournful sound; and like one who feels it to be so, we shall make the chapter which bears the title as short as possible.

Crossing the country to the town of Nozay, we found ourselves on the high road to Rennes, and mounted the next diligence which passed. This part of Brittany resembles a vast forest; although, when you look closer, you find corn-fields under the trees. The view, however, is wholly without diversity; and if you travel slowly, you find it possible, perhaps for the first time, to get sick of green leaves. This, however, was by no means the case with us: the diligence went at a rate which would have been applauded even in England; and, to say the truth, the swaying to and fro of the huge vehicle had by no means a sedative influence on our nerves.

Among the passengers there was a Sister of Charity, who seemed to have none of that love of death which characterises the Trappists. She screamed, and turned pale, in good secular fashion, at every jolt of the machine, counting her beads the while, and crossing herself with the most laudable industry.

Ten leagues from Nantes the road crosses the Don,

and we enjoy a peep of this beautiful river. It is here characterised by deep and narrow valleys, offering, at every turn, delicious views; among which the most charming is that of the Fairies' Lake.

Dervel, a little town farther on, is distinguished by the ruins of a château, formerly looked upon as one of the most considerable fortresses in Brittany. It was flanked by nine towers, surrounded by ditches always full of water, and could not be entered without crossing two drawbridges. In 1373 it was besieged by the famous Bertrand Duguesclin, who, after much trouble, compelled the defenders to sue for an armistice and give hostages. When the term expired, the Duke of Anjou summoned the castle to surrender, by a herald; but the garrison, having by this time repaired their fortifications, were in no mood to comply. They were then informed, that if they held out an instant longer, their hostages would be put to death before their eyes; and this having no effect, the threat was actually executed, and six men decapitated before the castle walls. The bloody deed was immediately avenged. A scaffold was soon erected along the loftiest window; on which the prisoners taken in the course of the siege were led out one by one. The duke was dismayed when he saw the heads of his friends drop into the ditch, and immediately sounded a retreat.

The town of Rennes, seated on the Vilaine, has an imposing appearance when viewed at a distance; but this imposing appearance is an imposition. In reality, it is a dull-looking, disagreeable place, although boasting a splendid Palace of Justice and Hôtel de Ville.

"In this situation, flat and uniform," says a French author, "this climate damp and melancholy, this severe and inelegant architecture of a town, that owes any beauty it may possess to a conflagration,—do we not recognise the capital of *Great* Britain?"

The flattering likeness is still further made out, he opines, by a great pasture-field near it, which represents Hyde Park; but in tracing the moral similarity of Rennes and London, or rather of the Great and Little Britons, he becomes deeply philosophical.

"I know not," says he, "that at Rennes French gaiety may not be mingled with a little English moroseness; I know not whether I deceive myself in imagining that they laugh there scarcely oftener than in London, and that when they do it is a forced laugh, not less different from that of Paris than are the banks of the Vilaine or the Thames from those of the Seine or the Rhône. I am not even far from thinking that this difference in soil and climate is the true cause of the difference in the character of the people, having long observed the influence exercised over both the physical and moral temperament of man by the temperature of the climate, and the nature of the places he inhabits."

Obstinacy, it seems, is the great national sin of the Bretons, a quality which is called *caractère* in Rennes, and *entêtement* in Paris. The Rhedones make no scruple of owning their liability to the charge—nay, they are proud of it, and twenty times a-day exclaim, not in apology, but justification, "Oh! oh! c'est que j'ai la tête Bretonne!" They are, however, frank and brave, as this severe critic allows. "The heart," he

adds — presenting us with a specimen of a French bull —"dominates in the woman, and genius dominates in both sexes. A fool is an exception in Brittany— a sort of accident, a variety of the species."

The following quotation from an epigram, concocted against his flock in the eleventh century, by Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, will, of course, be taken *cum grano salis*. We present it, in fact, for the sake of the versification, which even the facetious Mr. Hood might study with advantage.

> "Urbs Redonis, spoliata bonis, viduata colonis,
> Plena dolis, odiosa polis, sine lumine solis,
> In tenebris vacat illecebris, gaudetque latebris;
> Desidiam putat egregiam, spernitque sophiam."

From Rennes to St. Malo, the scenery continues nearly the same till you begin to approach the sea. The way, however, was beguiled by a lady in the coach, who, on passing through some town, the name of which we forget, took occasion to tell the story of a friend of hers.

This was a young lady, who had the fortune to reside in the same street where stood the prison of the town. One evening, while sitting at needle-work in her own room, the door was suddenly but noiselessly opened, and a man stood before her. She did not scream, as many young ladies would have thought themselves obliged to do; for, although the circumstance was undoubtedly singular, it was impossible that there could be any real danger. It was broad daylight; the street was crowded with passengers, and in the house itself

there were her father, and brothers, and a numerous family.

The stranger gazed in her face for some moments as if he would read her very soul. An expression of relief, or satisfaction, at length beamed on his features; and, turning round cautiously, he shut and bolted the door.

"Lady," said he, "I have escaped from the prison over the roofs of the houses. Save me!" At the moment a knocking was heard at the door. There was no time to reflect; she acted on the instinct of her woman's heart; and, pointing to a closet, where she was accustomed to keep her clothes and books, the stranger entered, and she locked him in.

"Why do you keep your door locked?" cried her elder brother. "You are wanted to come down to dinner."

"I was asleep," said she; "I forgot that I had locked it." She went down to dinner, and, subtracting a portion from every thing she put upon her plate, hid it in a towel; for the economy of the household was so managed, that she could not otherwise have obtained a morsel of bread without exciting surprise. On returning soon after to her room, she handed in the stolen property to her protégé, but without uttering a word; for her younger sister, who slept with her, and who rarely stirred from her side, was close at her heels.

At midnight, when this sister was asleep, and the whole house buried in silence, the young lady rose from bed, and, dressing herself, went into the closet to inquire into the stranger's wishes and intentions. A hurried whisper was all they could exchange, either now or

afterwards. During the two days he remained in the house, she never so much as touched his hand; and a brief question, and a monosyllable in reply, was their only intercommunication. At length, seizing the opportunity of a festival, when the streets were crowded at night, even after her father and his family had retired to bed, she called him from his lurking-place, opened noiselessly the outer-door, and set him free, neither party daring to utter a word.

From this time a change appeared to take place in the manner of the young lady. She became restless and uneasy. Her only business was gazing from her window into the street, and her only amusement poring over newspapers. One day, when at this latter employment, she was observed to grow pale; but not a word, nor sign, nor even look, escaped her which could betray the cause of her emotion. In that newspaper she read that her protégé had been retaken, and shot at Bourdeaux.

Soon after, to the grief and amazement of her friends, she expressed a wish to take the veil. No argument, no entreaty, had any effect. She was equally firm in adhering to her choice of a locality; and is at this moment a nun in one of the convents at Bourdeaux.

Long before reaching Saint Malo, the sameness of the prospect disappears. The woods begin to clear, and soon are only numerous and thick enough to give variety to the picture; the vast plain undulates in hills and valleys; the very air is keener and freer; and every thing proclaims the influence of the near ocean.

The sea, at length — the glorious sea — comes into the picture ; and, after casting a delighted eye over its expanse, our attention is fascinated by a huge and magnificent fortress which it surrounds, and by which it appears to be defied and controlled.

This is Saint Malo ; and here ends, for the present, a task so agreeable, that, like charity, it has been its own reward. Next year, we will recommence our wanderings, on the banks of the Seine, whither we hope to be accompanied by two classes of readers,— those who have been satisfied with us this time, and those who have not. The former — if there be such — will consent for their own sakes ; and, from the generosity of the latter, we expect another trial.

THE END.

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